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JAPANESE STUDIES ON MANCHURIA

Volume XI, Part 3

Book B

SMALL WARS AND BORDER PROBLEMS
THE NOMONHAN INCIDENT

(11)

5 Sept 1956

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

Part 1 of Volume XI in the series of Japanese Studies on Manchuria deals with border problems, clashes, and policies. Part 2 treats border garrisons and fortifications. For production reasons, the Changkufeng Incident was made Book A, Part 3, while the Nomonhan Incident is herewith presented as Books B and C.

The original manuscript on the Nomonhan Incident was prepared by Takushiro Hattori, a lieutenant colonel and senior operations staff officer in Kwantung Army Headquarters at the time of the Incident. Details of the period are reconstructed from Col. Hattori's diary, personal data, and recollections. Supplementary interrogations were conducted by Heizo Ishiwari, a lieutenant colonel in the Military History Section of the Army General Staff between 1942 and 1945. According to Col. Hattori:

Owing to the fact that very little reference data is available, some passages may be somewhat inaccurate. Nevertheless, because the author actually took part in the operations at Nomonhan; keenly felt a sense of responsibility for the failure; and witnessed the actual state of affairs, he believes that the record does not greatly deviate from the true facts.

Information contained in the original manuscripts was uneven in quality and emphasis, and was accompanied by gaps and incompleteness. The editor has attempted throughout to retain the literary flavor of the Japanese authors, within a more coherent and understandable whole. Subjective value judgments of the authors are also retained from the original, as the entire present series are Japanese studies under American historical editorship. Footnotes and documentation have been provided where they appear necessary, to explain, amplify, or correct statements made in the text.

Unlike the case of Changkufeng, the Japanese Army had prepared no official history of the Nomonhan Incident, prior to the end of World War II. All available secondary documentation, necessarily of an unofficial nature, has been used in preparing the present study, and is appropriately cited in the footnotes.

Valuable assistance was rendered to the editor by the Historical Division, Japanese Self Defense Force; and by the Personnel Section of the Repatriation Relief Bureau.

Hitherto unavailable data were generously provided by the following sources, in addition to Col. Hattori (ranks and posts as of the time of the Nomonhan Incident):

Maj. Gen. Yuzaburo Hata, CG, 3d Heavy
Field Artillery Brigade

Maj. Gen. Kotoku Sato, CG, 23d Infantry
Group

Col. Sueso Hamada, Senior Staff Officer,
Hq Sixth Army

Col. Shinichiro Sumi, CO, 26th Infantry
Regiment, 7th Division

Maj. Takeji Shimanuki, Operations Staff
Officer, Hq Kwantung Army

Maj. Yoshiyasu Suzuki, Staff Intelligence
Officer, 23d Division

Maj. Mitsuji Yano, Staff Officer, Hq
Mongolia Garrison Army

Capt. Saburo Hayashi, Assistant Military
Attache, Moscow

Capt. Masataka Iwata, Chief, OP Section,
Hq 3d Heavy Field Artillery Brigade

Capt. Kan Suemori, Harbin Army Special
Service Agency

Capt. Yoshio Tsutsui, CO, Survey Co, 1st
Artillery Intelligence Regiment

Mr. Yasugoro Horiba, Research Division,
South Manchurian Railway Company

Acknowledgment is also made for assistance rendered to the editor in the preparation of the present study by: 500th Military Intelligence Group; AFPE Map Service; Mr. J. Bassin, Special Assistant, American Embassy, Tokyo; and Mr. B. B. Blakeney, formerly counsel with the International Military Tribunal for the Far East.

Former-Col. Muraji Yano, now senior consultant to the Japanese Research Division, Office of the Military History Officer (and staff officer, 6th Section, Intelligence Bureau, Army General Staff, at the time of Nomonhan) has completely redrawn all maps and has provided constant assistance throughout the editing of this study.

5 September 1956

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Japanese Studies on Manchuria

Volume XI

Part 3

Book B

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CHAPTER 4

PRELUDE TO NOMONHAN INCIDENT

Introduction

From the political viewpoint, the Nomonhan Incident of 1939 represented a Soviet Russian stratagem designed to hamper Japan's efforts at settling the China Incident. The Soviets instigated the border incident to accomplish certain of their diplomatic objectives, at the very time that a precarious situation was prevailing in Europe on the eve of World War II. In strategic terms, both the Japanese and the Russians massed heavily in the Nomonhan area, where it was extremely difficult to carry out logistical operations. For some three months, the two sides fought modern-type battles involving air and ground forces, in actions which were a forerunner of the pattern evolved in the second World War.

The Kwantung Army, which was the Japanese protagonist in the Nomonhan Incident, had long been primarily stressing the defense of Manchukuo. To uphold its command prestige, this army exercised strict control over its subordinate echelons, and sought to resolve the Nomonhan Incident through unilateral measures involving direct action. As a consequence, the views of the Army High Command authorities in Tokyo, and those of Kwantung Army Headquarters in Hsinking, clashed head-on. While matters were still deadlocked, the Kwantung Army proceeded to commit a handful

of troops to cope with far superior enemy forces. The incident was eventually settled in the enemy's favor, after thousands of Japanese casualties had been incurred, and the highest-ranking officers of the Kwantung Army had been removed.

Intensive analysis of the Nomonhan Incident serves to reveal the combat characteristics of the Soviet armed forces of the time. From the standpoint of military command relationships, the incident also affords fruitful lessons concerning the adjustment of liaison channels between the High Command and forces in the field.

Kwantung Army Command Structure

At the time of the outbreak of the Nomonhan Incident, Gen. Kenkichi Ueda (b. 1875) had been commanding the Kwantung Army for over three years.¹ He was thoroughly familiar with the combat effectiveness of his command, the capabilities of the Soviet Army, and the actual state of affairs within Manchukuo. Not only the Kwantung Army staff officers but also the subordinate commanders and Manchukuoan Government leaders held Gen. Ueda in high personal esteem and relied upon him completely. He had formerly served as Deputy Chief of the Army General Staff to Prince Kanin

1. Gen. Ueda commanded the Korea Army from 1934 to 1935; and the Kwantung Army from March 1936 until his retirement in September 1939. - Ed.

(1933-34).²

Within the higher ranks of the Japanese Army, one of the foremost authorities on China was the Chief of Staff of the Kwantung Army, Lt. Gen. Rensuke Isogai (b. 1886). During 1936-37, he was Chief of the Military Affairs Bureau of the War Ministry.³ As Commanding General of the 10th Division, he had performed outstandingly during combat in China (1937-38). His insight, battle experience, and personality were highly regarded by all, and he held an important post as right-hand man to the Kwantung Army Commander. Although he kept in close touch with high-ranking officers on the Army General Staff and the War Ministry, he had no particular contact with the Army operational staffs at the time of Nomonhan.

Maj. Gen. Ootosaburo Yano (b. 1888), the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Kwantung Army, had served for a long time as an instructor and research director at the Infantry School at Chiba, and possessed great experience in troop training. Immediately after the

2. Lt. Gen. Gun Hashimoto, Chief of the 1st Bureau (Operations) at IGHQ during the Nomonhan Incident, had served under Gen. Ueda as Chief of the Organization and Mobilization Section. See text, below.

3. Japanese Army personnel records indicate that Gen. Isogai was Chief, 2d Bureau (Intelligence), Army General Staff (1933-35), and Military Attache to China (1935-36). - Ed.

outbreak of the China Incident in 1937, he was appointed Chief of the Operations Section of the North China Area Army; later he became Deputy Chief of Staff of the First Army in China. A man of high character, Gen. Yano was a senior staff officer who had had long experience as a field commander and was very familiar with conditions inside the Japanese Army. When the Nomonhan Incident arose, he had been Deputy Chief of Staff of the Kwantung Army for only one year, but he was well versed in the actual state of affairs within that army. Gen. Yano assisted Gen. Isogai by handling such important matters as operations and training for the Kwantung Army but, in so far as Manchurian matters were concerned, he had had very little experience. With his background of field command, and duties under the Inspectorate-General of Army Training, was in no position to maintain close connections with the Army General Staff or the War Ministry, although his personal attributes and insight were valued highly.

Other key staff officers of the Kwantung Army consisted of the following individuals:

Chief, 1st Section (Operations)	: Col. Masao Terada
Senior Operations Staff Officer	: Lt. Col. Takushiro Hattori

Operations Staff Officers	:	Lt. Col. Kasuo Murasawa Maj. Masanobu Tsuji Maj. Takeji Shimanuki
Senior Air Staff Officer	:	Lt. Col. Yasuyuki Miyoshi
Chief, 2d Section (Intelligence)	:	Col. Takesuke Isomura
Chief, 3d Section (Logistics)	:	Col. Goro Isoya
Chief, 4th Section (Manchukuoan Affairs):		Lt. Col. Tadashi Katakura

The high-ranking staff officers of the Kwantung Army were a closely knit group, far superior to past staffs. Throughout the Nomonhan Incident, units of the Kwantung Army executed their missions in close harmony.

High Command

The Chief of the General Staff of the Japanese Army at the time of the Nomonhan Incident was Prince Kotohito Kanin (1865-1945). Although this martial royal prince was very popular, he was over 70 years old, and most of his duties were delegated to the Deputy Chief of Staff and other subordinates.⁴

4. Prince Kanin had performed excellently as the major general in command of the 2d Cavalry Brigade during the Russo-Japanese War. He was made a full general in 1912, and a marshal in 1919. From December 1931 to October 1940, the Prince served as Chief of Staff. (Supplementary data provided by Imperial Household Agency.) - Ed.

Lt. Gen. Tetsuzo Nakajima (1886-1949), the Deputy Chief of Staff to Prince Kanin, had served as an instructor at the Army War College for many years. A man of high character, Gen. Nakajima nevertheless had had almost no combat experience, and was not conversant with matters pertaining to the Kwantung Army.⁵

Since January 1938, IGHQ's Chief of the Operations Bureau had been Lt. Gen. Gun Hashimoto (b. 1886), considered to be one of the most intelligent individuals within the entire Japanese Army. He had practically no experience, however, with overseas or field command duties, other than during his relatively brief tenure as Chief of Staff of the North China Garrison Army (1936-37), and of the First Army (Peiping, 1937-38).⁶ Gen. Hashimoto could not therefore be deemed familiar with the actual state of affairs in the Kwantung Army and in Manchukuo.

5. Gen. Nakajima served as aide-de-camp to the Emperor (1933-37); and Chief, General Affairs Bureau, Army General Staff (1937-38). - Ed.

6. Gen. Hashimoto served as Chief, 1st Section (Organization and Mobilization), Army General Staff, 1933-34; and Chief, Army Affairs Section, War Ministry, 1934-36. - Ed.

MAP NO. 11

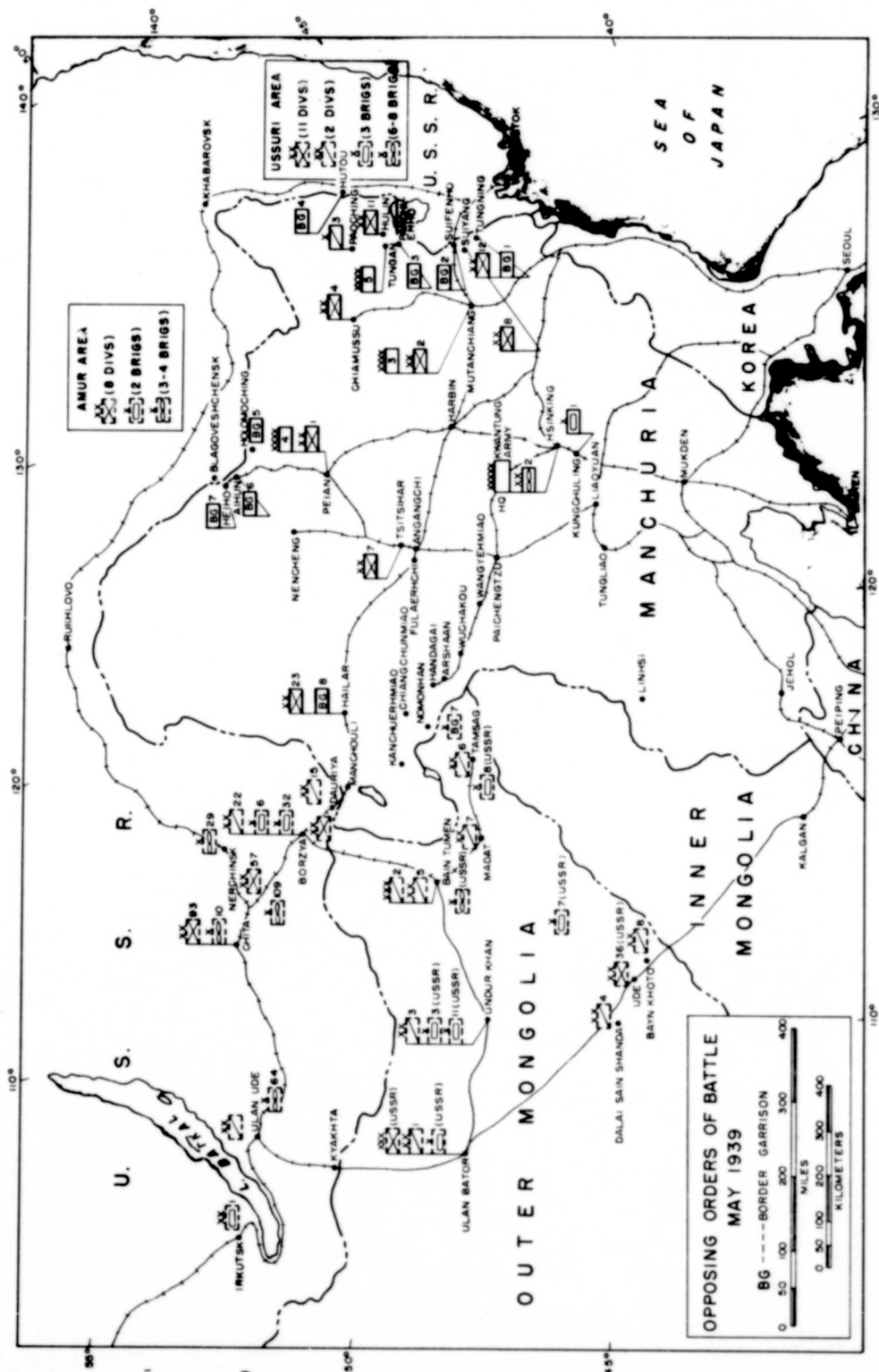
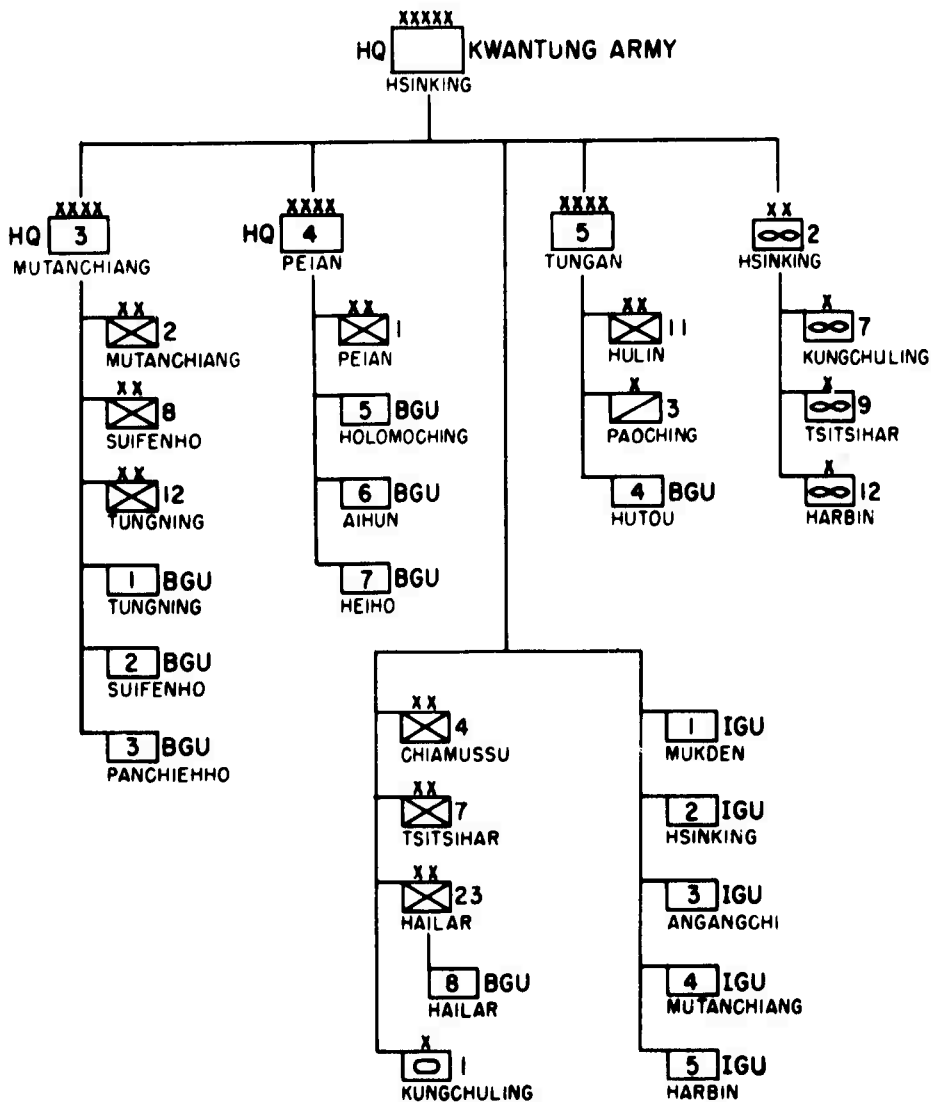


FIGURE 11

ORDER OF BATTLE, KWANTUNG ARMY
(MAY 1939)



BGU BORDER GARRISON UNIT
IGU INDEPENDENT GARRISON UNIT

Other staff officers responsible for operations included the following:

Chief, 2d Section	:	Col. Masazumi Inada
Staff Officers, 2d Section	:	Lt. Col. Yadoru Arisue Lt. Col. Tamotsu Kozuki Lt. Col. Okikazu Arao Maj. Noriyasu Shimamura
Senior Air Staff Officer	:	Lt. Col. Kazuo Tanikawa

Order of Battle, Kwantung Army

The order of battle and deployment of Japanese forces in Manchuria on the eve of the Nomonhan Incident are depicted in Figure 11 and Map No. 11. Independent garrison units plus elements of the 4th Division and of the 3d Cavalry Brigade were assigned to garrison stations throughout Manchukuo, while detachments from each border garrison unit guarded the frontiers. Apart from these units, the combat elements of the Kwantung Army were concentrated at various points and were engaged in training, with the bulk of their strength deployed along the eastern borders of Manchukuo. The northern front, around Heiho, was of second-priority importance while, in the northwestern area, only very small holding forces were stationed. The 7th Division, with headquarters at Tsitsihar, was the strategic reserve of the Kwantung Army. Only this one division could have been committed promptly in support of operations in the west.

Manchukuoan Army Forces

Guarded by elements of the Manchukuoan Army, the Nomonhan region constituted the most vulnerable defensive sector along the frontiers. At the time of the Nomonhan Incident, the actual troop strength of the entire Manchukuoan Army totaled about 80,200 officers and men. In peacetime, this Army was nominally under the direct command of the Emperor of Manchukuo but, in practice, it was subject to the control of the Commanding General, Kwantung Army, exercised through the Senior Japanese Military Adviser to the Hsinking Government. The Manchukuoan Army lacked training and combat effectiveness, and was hard put to maintain domestic security although it committed most of its forces to bandit-subjugation operations. Only the understrength Hsingan Cavalry Division (Hq: Hailar) and the Chingan Infantry Division (Hq: Mukden) were of potential value in the event of an actual war, and then merely for secondary operations. The deployment and composition of these last-named Manchukuoan divisions, as of mid-1939, are summarized in Table 13.

Frontier Guards

Maj. Gen. Tadamichi Yokoi, Chief of the Special Service Agency in Hailar at the time of the Nomonhan Incident, inspected Northwest Manchuria in early May 1939, to a point several kilometers east of

Manchukuoan Army
Hsangan and Chingan Divisions
(May 1939)

Table 13

	Station	Infantry	Cavalry	Artillery	Motor Transport	Other	Troop Strength
Hsangan Div	Bulk	-	4 regts	2 btrys*	1 unit	Med unit, Sig unit	1,851
	Det	-	3 regts, 1 trp	2 btrys,* 1 mort regt	Armed car unit, Trans unit	Med unit, Sig unit	2,936
Chingan Div	Bulk	2 regts, 1 co	1 regt	1 regt	-	Sig unit	1,176
	Det	1 regt	1 regt	1 regt	-	Sig unit	1,376
Total		3 regts, 1 co	9 regts, 1 trp	2 regts, 1 mort regt, 4 btrys	3 units	2 med units, 4 sig units	7,339

* Mountain Artillery (Pack Gun).

the Halha River. Manchukuoan or Japanese personnel stationed in the area consisted of the following units:⁷

Assuirumiao: (northwest of Lake Buir Nor)	one Manchukuoan cavalry squadron (approximately 100 men);
Amukulang:	several Japanese military police; and about 20 Manchukuoan police;
Nomotsohrin:	one Manchukuoan cavalry section (about 20 men and horses);
Nomonhan:	seven Manchukuoan policemen;
Handagai:	two agents of Hailar Special Service Agency; and about 10 Manchukuoan police.

According to Gen. Yokoi, his inspection party encountered no Outer Mongolian border guards to the east (right bank) of the Halha River: "No one molested us or attempted to prevent us from traveling in the area."

Lt. Gen. Rippei Ogisu, who commanded the Sixth Army during the fighting at Nomonhan, adds the following information concerning

7. IMTFE, Transcript, 9 Jun 47, Def. Ex. No. 3905, pp. 38,856-57. Also see then-Maj. Mitsuji Yano's report on an inspection which he conducted along the Manchukuoan-Outer Mongolian frontier, in Oct 38. Two Outer Mongol cavalrymen kept pace with the Yano party, along the left bank of the Halha, but without interfering in any way. Ibid., 26 May 47, Def. Doc. 1601, pp. 22,997-98. - Ed.

the frontier guard situation in the area under dispute:⁸

A Manchukuoan frontier observation post was located at Nomonhan, a little over 10 kilometers behind the Halha. It is common practice to set up a frontier guard post at a spot a little removed from the border line of any two countries. Moreover, the east bank of the Halha River is lowland, and is therefore unsuitable for the site of a frontier guard post. The guard post at Nomonhan was composed of Inner Mongolian guards Manchukuoan nationality, who were to keep watch at the frontier on the Manchurian side. The Outer Mongolian side had its pickets disposed along the left bank of the Halha River.

Soviet Army Order of Battle

In all Siberia east of Lake Baikal, the Soviets were thought to have the following ground and aerial strength (see Map No. 11):

Infantry divisions	--	20-30
Cavalry divisions	--	5-7
Mechanized brigades	--	6-8 (2,500 tanks)
Aircraft	--	2,500

Kwantung Army planning was based upon the assumption that the Soviet Far East Army outnumbered Japanese forces in Manchuria by a factor of 3:1 on the ground, and 2:1 in the air.

During the fighting at Nomonhan, the Soviets committed a total force estimated at three of four infantry divisions, five

8. Based upon ibid., 26 May 47, Def. Ex. No. 2656, pp. 23,029-30. - Ed.

mechanized brigades (430 tanks and the same number of armored cars), a regiment of Army General Reserve artillery, several regiments of Army Corps artillery, and three air brigades (perhaps 500-700 aircraft).⁹ In their massive assaults on 19-20 August, the Russians are believed to have used three infantry divisions and 45,000 troops, 350-500 tanks, 340 armored cars, several artillery brigades (210 heavy field guns), and 200 aircraft.¹⁰

By the time the Nomonhan Incident was brought to a close in September 1939, the Soviets had an estimated 100,000-120,000 troops opposing 70,000 Japanese.¹¹ It was later learned that the Soviet army corps, stationed at Ulan Bator, was commanded by Gen. Zhukov.¹²

9. Supplementary data concerning Soviet Far Eastern Army order of battle derived from: Japanese Studies on Manchuria, Vol. I, Japanese Operational Planning Against the USSR, p. 49; Vol. XIII, Study of Strategical and Tactical Peculiarities of Far Eastern Russia and Soviet Far East Forces, p. 47; Col. Saburo Hayashi, Taiheiyō Senso Rikusei Gaishi (Army Combat History of the Pacific War), (Tokyo, 1951), p. 23; Col. Takushiro Hattori, Daitō Senso Zenshi (Complete History of the Greater East Asia War), (Tokyo, 1953), Vol. I, pp. 43-44; DMTFE, Transcript, 20 May 47, statement by Lt. Gen. Gun Hashimoto, Def. Ex. 2621, p. 22,599. - Ed.

10. JRD Monograph No. 144, Political Strategy Prior to Outbreak of War, Part 1, p. 48; and evidence of CG, Sixth Army, Lt. Gen. Ogisu, DMTFE, Transcript, 27 May 47, p. 23,082. - Ed.

11. Estimate by then-Maj. Takeji Shimanuki, Kwantung Army Hq Operations Staff Officer. - Ed.

12. Testimony of Maj. A. E. Bykov, DMTFE, Transcript, 27 Jan 48, p. 38,370. Georgi K. Zhukov, the present Minister of Defense of the U.S.S.R., was elevated to the rank of Marshal in January 1943. - Ed.

According to Soviet Army battle maps, the Russians committed or planned to commit the following strength by the end of the fighting at Nomonhan (see Maps No. 14, 19, 24, and 25):

Infantry Divisions	2
Motorized Divisions	1
Cavalry Divisions (Outer Mongolian) .	2
AT Divisions	1-plus
Tank Brigades	5
MG Brigades	1
Artillery Brigades	1
Howitzer Regiments	1

The numerical designations of Soviet units identified above may be found in Table 14.

Outer Mongolian Army Forces

The Outer Mongolian Army consisted of about seven cavalry divisions, of which two were probably committed during the course of the Nomonhan Incident. (See Map No. 11). The Outer Mongolian Air Force comprised an estimated 70 aircraft, but none appear to have participated in the actual fighting.¹³

13. Supplementary data derived from editorial interview with former-Col. Mitsuji Iano; Tokyo, 21 Jun 56. Iano, a Japanese Army expert on Mongolian affairs, headed the Mongolian Branch, 5th Section, Army General Staff, Sep 37-Jan 39; and was staff officer, Hq Mongolia Garrison Army (Kalgan), Jan 39-Aug 41. At the time of Nomonhan, he was a major. - Ed.

Soviet and Outer Mongolian data concerning the composition and strength of front-line Mongol ground forces are summarized as follows.¹⁴ A frontier guard detachment of Ministry of Home Affairs troops of the "Mongolian People's Republic"--some 200 troops under a junior lieutenant--patrolled the sector east of the Halha River.¹⁵ Territory claimed by the Outer Mongols, and allegedly guarded by them, extended 20-22 kms. east of the Halha to a point several kilometers north of Nomonhan. The bulk of the 7th Mongolian frontier guard outpost was stationed one kilometer west of Samburin-Tsagan Nur, a little lake not far from the Hamardaba Mountains.¹⁶ More than ten patrols were dispatched daily to the east of the river, where posts were also established. The 200 men of the detachment were reinforced, during the fighting on 14-15 May, by about 100 Mongol reserve border guards.

14. Supplementary data on Outer Mongolian military forces based upon evidence of Maj. Puntsugin Chogdan, the former Jr. Lt. commanding the 7th Frontier Guards at Nomonhan; affidavit of 6 Dec 46, and examination, DMTFE, Transcript, 29 Jan 48, pp. 38,528, 38,532-33; ibid., 30 Jan 48, pp. 38,568-70. Also see ibid., 27 Jan 48, pp. 38,363, 38,373, 38,375-76 (evidence of Soviet Army Maj. A. E. Bykov). - Ed.

15. In the region of Nomonhan, the Halha River flows from south to north, in general. Hereafter in the text, "east" will be used interchangeably with "right bank" of the Halha; and "west" with "left bank" of that river. - Ed.

16. According to Mongolian Army Maj. Chogdan, his outpost was transferred to a point one kilometer southwest of Khulatulun Obo, on 7 Jun 39. Ibid., 29 Jan 48, p. 38,537. - Ed.

Soviet Army Units Identified at Nomonhan
(Soviet Map Data)

Table 14

Period	Mtz Regt	Mtz Div	Inf Div	Cav Regt	Cav Div	AT Div	Tk Brig	MG Brig	Airborne Brig	Arty Regt	Engrs
28 May 39*	149th	-	-	15th 17th Comp sqds	-	-	*	-	-	?	1 co
2-5 Jul 39	#	36th#	-	/	6th/ 8th	-	7th 9th 11th	-	-	?	-
20-31 Aug 39	#	36th#	57th** 82d ##	/	6th 8th	37th// 87th	6th 7th 8th 9th 11th	5th	212th	82d How	-

* Also see Ch. 5, section entitled "Soviet Version of Events, May 1939." - Ed.

36th Mtz Inf Div: 24th and 149th Mtz Inf Regts.

/ 6th Cav Div (Outer Mongolian): 15th, 17th, and (?) Cav Regts.

** 57th Inf Div: 80th, 127th, and 293d Inf Regts.

82d Inf Div: 601st, 602d, and 603d Inf Regts.

// Only 1/185 Arty Regt (equipped with T-130 tanks) committed.

No Mongolian Army regular forces were reportedly stationed east of Tamsag, which was the headquarters of the 6th Mongolian Cavalry Division. On 20 May, the latter division deployed two squadrons (250 "sabers") to the Hamardaba range west of the Halha.

Kwantung Army Mission

After all key points within Manchuria had been secured following the Incident of 18 September 1931, the Army General Staff clarified the Kwantung Army's mission, per Emergency Order No. 25 (16 June 1932): "The Commanding General, Kwantung Army, will undertake the defense of all key points in Manchukuo." Subsequently, the requirement was expanded by the Army General Staff to include Kwantung Army responsibility for undertaking "the defense of Manchukuo."

With the build-up of Soviet Army strength in the Far East, the Russians frequently violated the Manchukuoan frontiers, and border incidents repeatedly occurred at places where the border was not clearly marked. (See Part 1 of the present study.) Some of the Kwantung Army's forward patrols could not perform their missions because they felt obliged to act only passively; other units acted aggressively and thus ran the risk of enlarging individual incidents. These problems were attributable to the fact that Kwantung Army Headquarters had not instructed its subordinate commands concerning any definite policy for settling border incidents. As a

consequence, the Kwantung Army had to issue Operations Order No. 1488 (April 1939), which clarified Army policies.¹⁷ Although this Order was reported to the Army High Command authorities, no instructions or directives regarding its purport were received from Tokyo until after the enlargement of the Nomonhan Incident. The Kwantung Army therefore had continued to assume that the High Command had sanctioned Order No. 1488, and subordinate Army commands were directed in accordance with the principles laid down in that Order.

Operations Order No. 1488 was designed to check Soviet infiltration of Manchukuoan territory, such as had been frequently experienced in the past, at Changkufeng, Kanchatzu, Yangmulinzu, and Suifenho. The provisions of the Order which stipulated that Japanese troops would carry out positive action, and that the settlement of problems arising therefrom would be left to higher headquarters, were meant to free the forward elements from worry, and to buttress them with a firm conviction of victory. The habit of fearing or evading responsibility had been caused by vagueness on the part of the Kwantung Army in the past, and had thrown the brunt of accountability upon the front-line units. The new policy

17. "Principles for the Settlement of Soviet-Manchurian Border Disputes;" text of this order is presented in Appendix A, Part 1 of the present study. Also see Chapter 3, pp. 87-88, ibid. - Ed.

now reflected the significant resolve of the Kwantung Army to assume full responsibility for the settlement of border disputes. When the Nomonhan Incident erupted, soon after the promulgation of Operations Order No. 1488, Kwantung Army Headquarters demonstrated its firm policy in managing the affair.

Operational Planning Against U.S.S.R.

Since the main effort of the Japanese Army was devoted to settling the China Incident, it was only natural that the Kwantung Army should emphasize the avoidance of war with the Soviet Union. The eight divisions in Manchuria obviously could not single-handedly wage a decisive campaign against the 20-30 divisions of the Soviet Far Eastern Army, and the Kwantung Army therefore exerted strenuous efforts to check Soviet Army attempts at obstructing the resolution of the China Incident.

According to Lt. Gen. Gun Hashimoto, previously mentioned as Chief of the Operations Bureau at the time of Nomonhan, the Japanese operations in China appeared "unsystematic and haphazard," because "we did not like to get into hostilities with China, and we feared the Russian menace to the north; security against Russia was always the most necessary premise, and the Supreme Command always had to direct the China operations with close observation of the movement of the Soviet Far Eastern Army." After the close of the Wuchang-Hankow and Canton operations in 1938, states Gen. Hashimoto, the

Japanese Army prepared for a protracted war in China, and adhered to a policy of conserving military strength. With the enlargement of occupied areas, however, "it was necessary to reinforce our garrison forces, so there was not a bit of surplus strength left in our army."¹⁸

From the end of 1938 until the outbreak of the Nomonhan Incident, the Japanese possessed the following strength:

China	:	27 divisions
Manchuria	:	8 divisions
Korea	:	1 division
Homeland	:	1 division

We estimated the strength of the Soviet Far Eastern forces at that time [continues Gen. Hashimoto] as consisting of at least 30 infantry divisions, 2,000 tanks, and 2,000 airplanes.

Regarding munitions needed for military operational consumption against China, as well as for organizing new units, we could not provide satisfactory stocks of materiel. At the time of the Nomonhan Incident, the quantity of operational materiel which the Kwantung Army possessed was far from sufficient, compared with the number of its troops. Already in the first stages [of the incident], our troops experienced hard fighting due to the insufficient supply of arms and ammunition.¹⁹

18. Based upon affidavit of Lt. Gen. Gun Hashimoto, 5 Jan 47; DMTFE, Transcript, 20 May 47, Def. Ex. No. 2622, pp. 22,592-93. - Ed.

19. Based upon ibid., pp. 22,593-94. - Ed.

The underlying strategic concepts of the Kwantung Army vis-a-vis the Soviet Union were based upon two premises:

(1) The main policy of the Kwantung Army should be positive in nature, involving requisite military preparations, strict defense of the borders, and precautions against vulnerable exposure to Soviet attack. Conversely, a negative policy would only encourage the Russians to adopt aggressive measures.

(2) In the event that Japanese forces are subjected to a large-scale, concerted attack by the Soviet Army, and all-out hostilities result, the bulk of the Kwantung Army will secure key border sectors along the eastern front. Together with reinforcements to be dispatched from China and from the homeland, the Kwantung Army will launch a main offensive along the Third Army front and will annihilate enemy forces in the southern Maritime Province. Meanwhile, Kwantung Army forces in the north (Heiho area) and northwest (Hailar area) are to fight holding actions.

Lt. Col. Takushiro Hattori, Chief of the Kwantung Army Operations Section at the time of Nomonhan, describes that army's contemporary thinking thus:²⁰

20. Based upon DMTFE, Transcript, 26 May 47, pp. 23,014-16.
- Ed.

In its plan of operations vis-a-vis the U.S.S.R. in 1939, the Kwantung Army had no offensive plans toward the western border--i.e., toward Hailar, Arshaan, or the western Outer Mongolia area. At that time, in the event of a war breaking out between Japan and the U.S.S.R., we estimated that the main field of battle in Manchuria would be toward the eastern border, so the Kwantung Army was to plan to hold out in the west with minimum strength. Directly after the commencement of a war, it could naturally be expected that a powerful Soviet force would thrust against the Hailar area. Against this, our forces were only the 23d Division....and the Hailar border defense garrison; so it was to be expected that warfare in this area would, within a short period, develop into our being completely surrounded by the powerful Soviet Army.

We, on our part, therefore built circular fortifications on the heights around Hailar, and prepared to fight to the last, completely on the defensive, thus absorbing the opponent's manpower and accomplishing our objective of holding out. The Arshaan area (on the southern side of the Hsingan mountains) is also a point of strategic importance, and it was hoped to station, in this area, a unit capable of fighting; but we had to refrain from doing so because of the overall manpower question. Eventually, in 1939, we permanently stationed the Arshaan garrison, and we planned to hold out in this area, in wartime, with a strength of only about a single division. In the study of operations at that time, the point which most concerned an officer in charge of operations was: would we be able to hold out on the front near Hailar, to Arshaan--against a far more powerful Soviet attack? But to allot sufficient manpower to this district would have meant the sacrifice of manpower in the main field of battle--operations in the interior; so, from a consideration of the general

situation, we limited the commitment to the smallest possible number. We were perhaps risking even less than the minimum; hence instructions for operations were entirely defensive....

In accordance with these strategic concepts of the Kwantung Army, the main emphasis was therefore devoted to the eastern front, with the Third Army being assigned the primary mission. Even if incidents broke out elsewhere, the Third and the Fifth armies were not to be transferred from the Mutanchiang and Tungan regions. To the north, the Fourth Army (Hq: Peian) prepared for its holding mission, manning border defenses against possible enemy crossings of the Amur River. At Hailar, the 23d Division was engaged solely in training for holding operations, including tactical counterattacks.

Although the 7th Division (at Tsitsihar) was assigned to be the Army's strategic reserve force, its orders called for training preparations envisaging primary commitment along the Third and Fifth Army fronts, in the east. As for the 4th Division (Hq: Chiamussu), about half of its effective strength was engaged in the subjugation of bandits in Sanchiang Province.

Combat Effectiveness. 23d Division and 8th BGU

The 23d Division, which was to figure very prominently in the Nomonhan Incident, was newly activated at Kurume (northern Kyushu) in April 1938, under the aegis of the 12th Depot Division. On 11 July 1938, the 23d Division was assigned to the Kwantung Army, with duty station at Hailar.²¹ Because this green division lacked training and esprit de corps, Army Headquarters feared that it would prove incapable of fulfilling an important wartime mission. The decision was therefore made to assign the 23d Division to holding operations based upon border defenses; the unit would not be expected to wage offensive action.

Col. Seijun Inada, Chief of the IGHQ Operations Section at the time of Nomonhan, states that the year-old 23d Division had no equipment suitable for operations against the Soviet Union.

The division had been activated for use in operations against China, and was posted in this least troubled region to fill a gap caused by the transfer to China of the /division-size/ cavalry group heretofore stationed in the Hailar area.²²

21. Supplementary data based upon untranslated division assignment chart, prepared by 1st Demobilization Bureau, Jun 54. - Ed.

22. "Fuun Nomonhan Jiken no Higeiki" ("The Crucial Nomonhan Incident Ends in Tragedy"), Jinbutu-Orai, Feb 56, #50, p. 33. - Ed.

A "new-style" unit organized along triangular lines, the 23d Division consisted of the following elements (see Fig. 12), with a total authorized strength of approximately 13,000:

- Three infantry regiments
- One cavalry reconnaissance regiment
- One field artillery regiment
- One engineer regiment (two companies)
- One transport regiment (two motor transport companies)

For antitank defense, each infantry regiment possessed one antitank gun company (four 37-mm. pieces) and one regimental gun company (four 75-mm. mountain guns); while the artillery regiment had 36 field guns (75-mm.). Total divisional antitank strength thus comprised twelve 37-mm. AT guns, twelve 75-mm. mountain guns, and thirty-six 75-mm. field guns.

The 23d Cavalry Reconnaissance Regiment consisted of one mounted troop of horsemen, and one light armored car company (about thirteen vehicles). The regiment could be expected to cope with a charge by Outer Mongolian cavalymen, but possessed no organic antitank weapons.

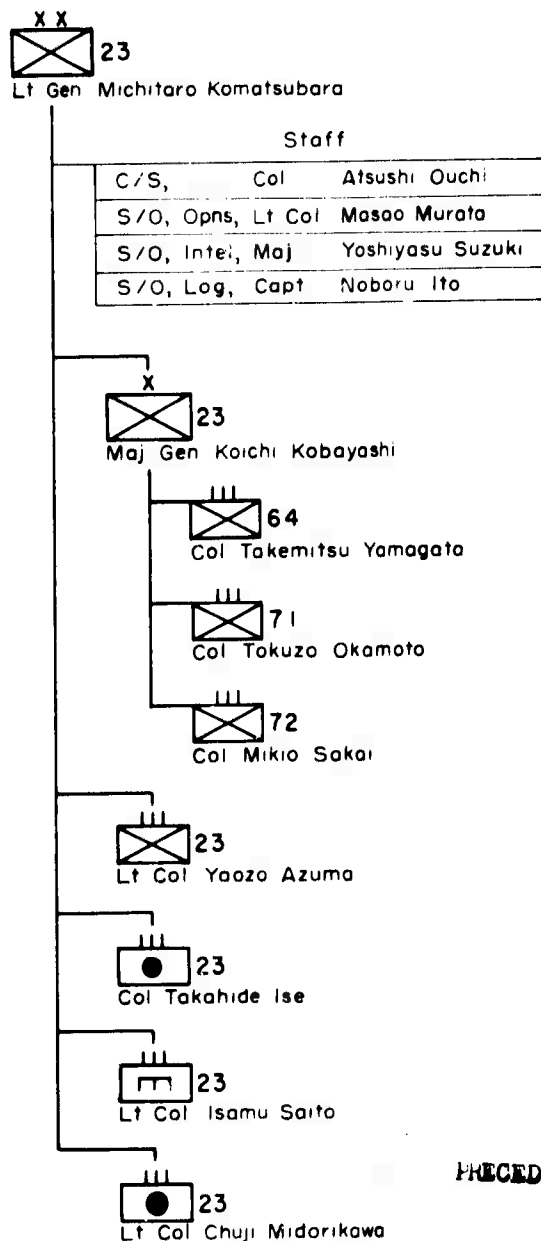
Two companies made up the engineer regiment, which had only explosive charges for antitank defense. Each divisional combat unit was supplied with a few demolition charges for use against armor. Two types of antitank devices were improvised: small, round charges on long poles (nicknamed "hardtack" mines); and

FIGURE 12



FIGURE 13

23d DIVISION COMMAND STRUCTURE
(MAY 1939)



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incendiary "Molotov cocktails"---soft-drink bottles filled with gasoline.

The 8th Border Garrison Unit (Hq: Hailar), attached to the 23d Division, consisted of four infantry battalions, one artillery regiment (two battalions), and one engineer battalion (two companies), with a total strength of about 7,000. The bulk of the 8th BGU was assigned to the defense of positions near Hailar, and only small elements saw action at Nomonhan. Since the unit possessed scant mobility and lacked field training, Army Headquarters felt that its combat effectiveness was low.

23d Division Staff Officers

Lt. Gen. Michitaro Komatsubara (b. 1885), in command of the 23d Division, was highly regarded as an expert on Russian matters, and had served for years as Chief of the Special Service Agency at Harbin. Neither reckless nor excitable, Gen. Komatsubara was known as an extremely gentle and courteous officer, who maintained good working relationships with his subordinates.

The divisional chief of staff, Col. Atsushi Ouchi, was another gentle individual, with a career in the cavalry; he functioned as an able assistant to the division commander. Lt. Col. Masao Murata, an artilleryman, was the senior operations officer on the division staff. Other key officers and their posts, as of the period of Nomonhan, are tabulated in Fig. 13. Analysis of the

careers of all 23d Division staff officers, from the Division Commander down, indicates a universal lack of combat experience.

Terrain Analysis

Topography

The battles which took place near Nomonhan were fought across undulating, sandy plains.²³ Grass covers the low-lying river banks, and the dunes are studded with scrub pines and shrubs less than a meter in height; but there is little cover for large ground forces. Almost the entire desert-like region is suitable for vehicular movement, although the deep sand and the dunes hamper traffic to some extent. An Outer Mongolian Army officer characterizes the region as follows:²⁴

The area around Nomonhan is covered with small hills which are called barkhans, and there are also plains. Nomonhan-burd Obo itself is situated on top of a small hill which is near the Hailastin-Gol /Holsten/ River.

23. The military geography of Northwest and West Manchuria is treated comprehensively in Vol. III, Part 4 of the Japanese Studies on Manchuria (Chapters 1 and 2). Terrain photographs of the Nomonhan locale are presented at ibid., Photographs No. 1-4.
- Ed.

24. Based upon IMTFE, Transcript, 30 Jan 48, pp. 38,551-52 (cross-examination of Maj. P. Chogdan). - Ed.

FIGURE 14

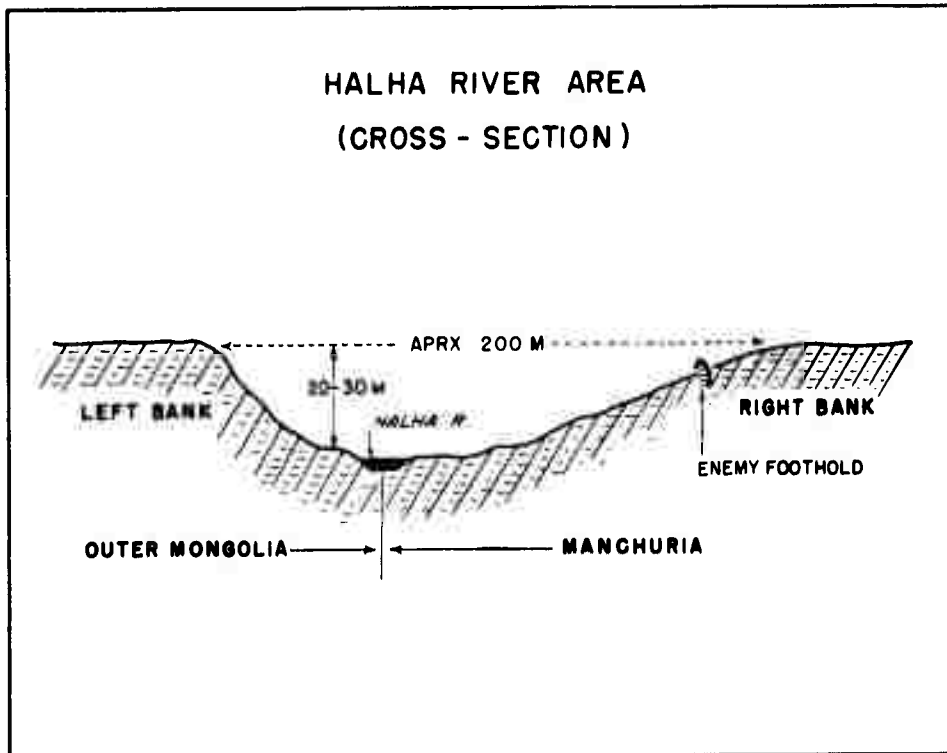
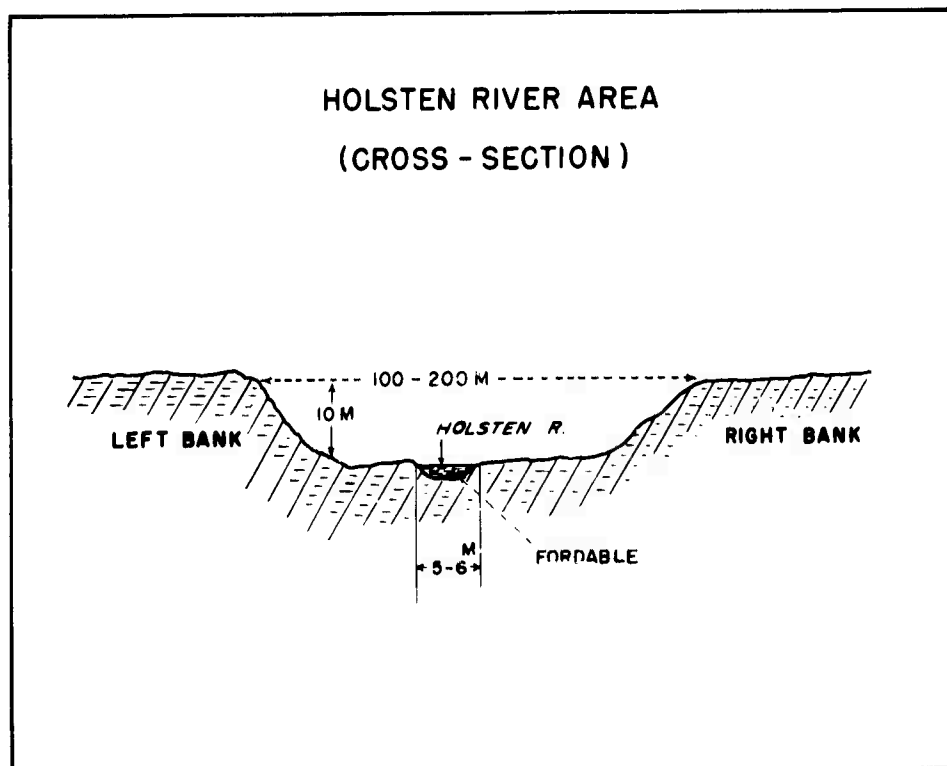


FIGURE 15



The height of the hills is 40-50 meters; near Nomonhan-burd Obo it is 45 meters.²⁵ The Hailastin-Gol River area is low country, but near Nomonhan there are also small swamps and ravines.

The differential in height between the two banks of the Halha River is topographically significant, as may be seen in cross-section (Fig. 14). Near the confluence of the Holsten and the Halha, the Outer Mongolian shore of the latter river is slightly higher than the Manchurian side. During the Nomonhan fighting, this factor proved extremely disadvantageous, since the entire east bank was exposed to the fire of enemy artillery deployed across the river. To overcome this critical drawback, the Japanese found it obligatory to withdraw north of the Chiangchunmiao region.

In tactical terms, an enemy force which crosses the frontier and advances to the right bank of the Halha can be effectively covered by artillery from the other shore. Conversely, a friendly force which launches a counterattack against the enemy's reverse slope positions on the right bank becomes vulnerable to enemy gunfire from the opposite shore. By the same token, friendly artillery cannot lay down effective covering fire.

25. Japanese Army maps prepared after the Nomonhan Incident indicate an altitude of 721 meters above sea level at Nomonhan-burd Obo; the immediately surrounding terrain is given as 700 meters. - Ed.

Low grass covers the banks of the Holsten River, where furious combat occurred during the Nomonhan Incident. Troops can move overland freely throughout this sector, but river-crossing operations by tanks and motor vehicles require simple bridging measures. To a certain extent, the low ground affords cover against enemy ground reconnaissance. (See Fig. 15).

Rivers and Lakes

The Halha River rises in the southern reaches of the Greater Heingan range, flows northwestward along the border between Manchuria and Outer Mongolia, and empties into Lake Buir Nor. In the locale of the flatland steppes where fighting took place near Nomonhan, the Halha possesses the following characteristics (figures are approximate):²⁶

Width: 50 meters
Depth: 2 meters (maximum), very few fordable points
Velocity of flow: 3.5 kilometers per hour

The Outer Mongolian shores of the Halha are steep but scalable, while the Manchurian side slopes gently. Sand comprises the river bed, and the water is clear. During the Nomonhan Incident, both belligerents struggled to control the Halha as a source of front-line water supply.

26. Also see Map No. 4, Chapter 1, Part 4 of Vol. III in the Japanese Studies on Manchuria. - Ed.

Although the Holsten River poses almost no obstacle to tactical movement, it assumed significance, during the combat at Nomonhan, as the only source of water supply for Japanese forces. The low ground along the banks of the Holsten could provide cover against enemy fire, and could be utilized as a site for hospital or casualty clearing facilities.

Most of the desert lakes, whether large or small, are saline; their water is therefore unpotable. The depth of the various bodies of water is unknown, but troops cannot easily traverse them. The salt lakes are very useful, however, as cartographic reference points.

Transportation Facilities²⁷

A good motor road exists between Hailar and Chiangchunmiao. The surface is sandy, and even during the rainy season the roadway is well drained and permits vehicular traffic. Along the road there is either grass or sand; by slightly detouring, two-way traffic can easily pass. The Hailar-Chiangchunmiao road can therefore be effectively used as the main supply route although, in case of aerial attack, cover is unavailable because of the almost complete absence of wooded areas along the roadway.

27. See Map No. 12. - Ed.

In general, vehicular traffic is possible between Hailar and Kanchuerhmiao. Where drifted sand blocks the route, troops must dismount, push their vehicles, or improvise ways to grade the road surface. Cover from air attack is almost impossible.

The road between Kanchuerhmiao and Chiangchunmiao runs through grassland and sandy country. Vehicular movement is feasible, although delays must be anticipated in the desert belts, where radiator water is almost unobtainable. Against aerial assault, cover is totally impossible.

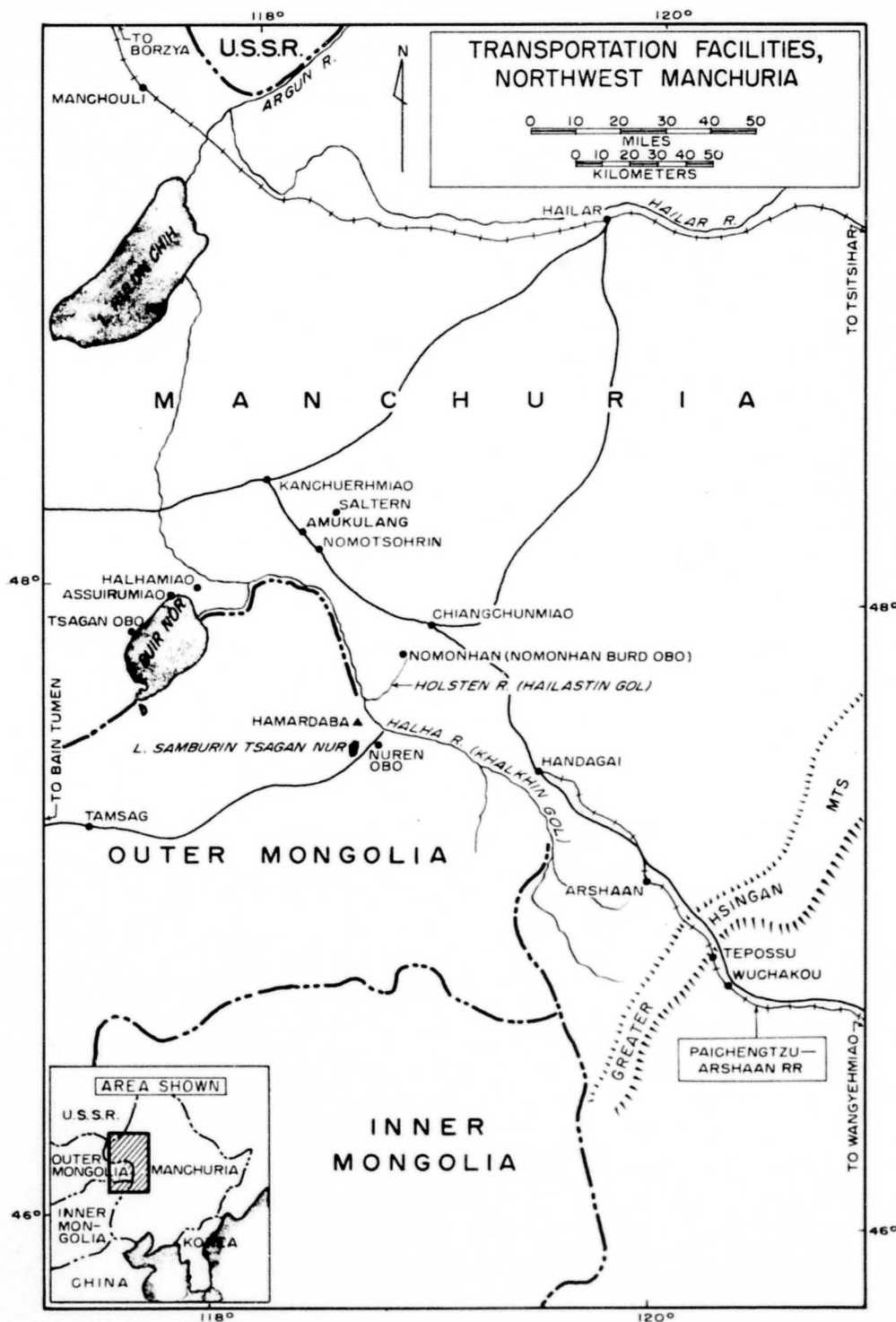
An important strategic roadway connects Wangyehmiao, Arshaan, Handagai, and Chiangchunmiao, in conjunction with the Paichengtsu-Arshaan-Handagai rail line. Between Arshaan and Handagai, the motor road is affected by seasonal rains, but only minor road work is required to overcome the mud and the swampy terrain.

Although scant information is available concerning the transportation system in Outer Mongolia, the situation there appears to be much the same as in Northwest Manchuria. Visual observation indicates that motor vehicles can operate swiftly across almost every part of the Mongol country.

Soil Conditions

Trenches are very easily dug in the sandy soil around Nomonhan, but framing structures are necessary, employing heavy boards or galvanized sheet iron. (See Appendix F). It is similarly easy

MAP NO. 12



to drive in stakes, although their fixity poses a difficult problem, which can only be overcome by sinking the piles about twice the depth that is usual in solid ground. The surface soil on the grassy steppes is about ten centimeters, overlying sand. In an emergency, foxholes could be dug in less than twenty minutes.

Climate

The climate of Northwest Manchuria is typically Continental. When the Nomonhan Incident broke out in May, the days were very hot, but the nights were cold, even for those who were wearing winter clothes. During July and August, the temperatures soar in the daytime, yet at night the cold interferes with sleep. After mid-September, temperatures fall sharply, reaching about 14 degrees F. by the middle of October. During winter, the mercury often drops to -30 degrees F.

Dawn and twilight last for more than an hour. On summer nights, mosquitoes and horseflies swarm, and netting becomes imperative. Rainfall is very slight and does not interfere with military operations. In the summer (especially during August), dense fogs rise at dawn.

Inhabitation

With a population of some 3,000, centering around the lamasery, Kanchuerhiao is quite a large trading center, by Mongol standards. Market days are held at regular intervals, and the nomads converge

upon the community from great distances to barter livestock products. During festival rites at the lamasery, Kanchuerhmiao is also thronged.

Other than tiny hamlets like Nomonhan, where several Mongols dwell, the only other Northwest Manchurian community is Chiang-chunmiao, which has several dozen huts. None of the hamlets possesses much inherent significance, except as excellent battlefield landmarks or targets.

CHAPTER 5

NOMONHAN INCIDENT: 1st PHASE

Outbreak of Incident

At 1500 hours on 13 May 1939, Kwantung Army Headquarters received the following radio message from Hailar:

Komatsubara Hq Rad Msg No. 194

To: CG, Kwantung Army

From: CG, 23d Div

1. On the morning of the 12th, about 700 Outer Mongolians committed a border violation by crossing the Halha River at a point west of Nomonhan, and have been fighting with an element of the Manchukuoan Army since the morning of the 13th. The enemy appears to have been reinforced.

2. The Area Defense Commander [CG, 23d Division] plans to destroy the enemy force by employing the following strength:

Elements of 23d Division, primarily the below-mentioned units:

main body of reconnaissance unit
[one regiment] under its commander
[Lt. Col. Azuma];
two infantry companies under an
infantry battalion commander.

1

All Manchukuoan Army troops at Hailar.

All military vehicles plus requisitioned transport at Hailar will be employed in the operations; hereafter, no motor vehicles will

1. The bulk of the Manchukuoan Army's Hsingan Division consisted of some 1,850 cavalry, artillery, and supporting troops at Hailar. See Table 13. - Ed.

be available in Hailar for military use.

3. It is requested that a minimum of 100 motor vehicles be dispatched, in view of subsequent reinforcements. Consideration is also requested for the future dispatch of further motor vehicles.

Immediate dispatch to Hailar of reconnaissance aircraft for use by the Area Defense Commander is also requested.

2

It is requested that tank elements stationed at Hailar be placed temporarily under the Area Defense Commander.

The troop strength of Manchukuoan forces which can be concentrated near the battlefield i.e., forward elements does not exceed about 300.

When the report from Gen. Komatsubara was delivered to the Commanding General, Kwantung Army, at his official residence, a routine conference was then in session, involving the Operations Section chief (Lt. Col. Hattori) and other staff officers. Col. Hattori describes
3
the contemporary events as follows:

It took about 36 hours for information to reach Army Headquarters in Hsinking, from the time that the incident broke out near Nomonhan. This is accounted for by the fact that the Japanese Army had no installation near that district. Communications to Hailar, about 200 kilometers away, were handled by the inefficient communication system of the Manchukuoan Army.

2. Less than ten Japanese light tanks were stationed at Hailar, for field test purposes, at the time of the outbreak of the Nomonhan Incident. - Ed.

3. Based upon IMTFE Transcript, 26 May 47, Def. Ex. No. 2655, pp. 23,016-22. - Ed.

On receipt of the telegram, our reaction was: "Has it happened again?" We felt unpleasant. Nomonhan was a very out-of-the-way place, to which we attached no importance, so not one of the staff officers knew its location. After making our report to the Commanding General, Kwantung Army, we went back to headquarters. Although we requested the intelligence section of the staff to bring a map of the Hailar district, as well as ordering investigations to be made by the chief of topography, it was not easy to locate the place. At last, after several hours, we found a place called 'Nomonhan Buru.' Deciding that this must be the place, we began to study countermeasures.

Under the circumstances, no action on the part of the Army Commander could be taken that day. On the following day (the 14th), after consultations between the Commanding General and his staff, the necessary measures were taken: a telegram was sent to the 23d Division Commander to the effect that the Kwantung Army Commander agreed with his decisions, but that in the settlement of the incident, we could not permit crossing of the border from our side; also that the Division Commander should take the most extreme caution not to let the matter become enlarged.

Even after the Kwantung Army staff had finally pinpointed Nomonhan on a map, nobody in the headquarters felt that this insignificant little mound of sand would become the site of raging battles that made world headlines. Only one month before, the Army Commander had issued "Principles for the Settlement of Soviet-Manchurian Border Disputes." The time had now come for the area defense commanders to put these principles into practice.

Army Estimate of Situation

Kwantung Army Headquarters judged that the Nomonhan Incident had broken out because Outer Mongolian cavalry had sought to toy with the weak Manchukuoan outpost stationed on the right bank of the Halha River. The 23d Division would soon repulse the marauders by taking positive action, and the incident would not be aggravated. This estimate of the situation was based upon the following premises:

(1) From the broad strategic viewpoint, Nomonhan possesses no great strategic importance.

(2) The movement of large-scale ground forces is unfeasible because both sides would encounter serious logistical difficulties.

(3) Elements of friendly cavalry, in a previous clash with Outer Mongolian horsemen near Halhamiao, ⁴ had manifested a passive attitude. This episode, in turn, may have caused enemy contempt for the lukewarm response on the part of the defenders, and probably led to the present incident. By taking bold and appropriate action now, the 23d Division Commander will thwart the enemy's intentions.

Army Reinforcements

After receiving requests from the 23d Division Commander for reinforcements to carry out his defensive mission, Kwantung Army

4. In January 1935, elements of the Manchukuoan and Japanese armies had clashed with Outer Mongolian cavalry between Lake Buir Nor and the Halha River, northwest of Nomonhan, in the so-called Halhamiao Incident. See Chapter 3, Part 1 of the present volume.
- Ed.

Headquarters immediately dispatched the following units and placed them under divisional control:

- 10th Air Regiment (less one squadron) -- one light bomber squadron
- 24th Air Regiment -- two fighter squadrons
- 48th Airfield Battalion (less one element)
- 51st Airfield Battalion
- Two motor transport companies

Army Reconnaissance

Simultaneously with the dispatch of reinforcements to the 23d Division, Kwantung Army Headquarters ordered an operations staff officer, Maj. Tsuji, to proceed immediately to the front, where he was to conduct aerial reconnaissance of the battle situation. From Hsinking, Maj. Tsuji flew in an Army scout plane directly to Hailar. On the afternoon of 14 May, he took off again to reconnoiter the Nomonhan sector, east of the Halha River. When the reconnaissance plane returned to Hailar from its low-level surveillance of the front, it was found that the fuel tank had been punctured by rifle fire, which led to the obvious conclusion that Outer Mongolian horsemen were operating on the right bank of the Halha River. No Outer Mongol cavalry were sighted in the open, but several horses⁵ were observed in a small pine grove along the lower reaches of the Holsten River.

5. For reasons of clarity and euphony, the Japanese Army customarily labeled any tree a "pine" (matsu). According to experts on the Nomonhan area, Chinese willows will actually be found on the steppes. - Ed.

Command Liaison

A summary of the 23d Division Commander's report, and of the subsequent actions taken by Kwantung Army Headquarters, was transmitted promptly to the Chief of the General Staff in Tokyo. In reply, the Deputy Chief of Staff immediately wired the following message: "It is expected that appropriate measures will be taken⁶ by the Kwantung Army."

Subsequent Developments

A task force under Lt. Col. Azuma, the commander of the 23d Reconnaissance Regiment, had been dispatched from Hailar pursuant to divisional orders (see Komatsubara Hq Rad Mag No. 194, dated 13 May 39, text above). The Azuma Detachment included one horse cavalry troop and one armored reconnaissance company, plus two infantry companies.

Arriving at the front on 15 May, the Azuma Detachment learned from the local Manchukuoan Army outpost at Nomonhan that the bulk of the Outer Mongolian forces had fallen back to the left bank of the Halha River during the night of the 14th. Very small elements still remained on the right bank, but even they appeared about to withdraw. At about 1300 hours on the 15th, Col. Azuma commenced pursuit operations, after observing the gradual withdrawal of the

6. Presumably, the message was transmitted and the reply received by Kwantung Army Headquarters on 14 May. - Ed.

Mongols to the left shore of the river. The task force advanced from the Nomonhan area toward the Halha, but almost no ground contact was made with the enemy. Japanese light bombers sighted the retreating Outer Mongolians, however, and bombed a troop concentration on the left bank, killing 30-40 soldiers.

Concluding that the Azuma Detachment had fulfilled its defensive mission, the 23d Division ordered it to return to Hailar. One Manchukuoan Army cavalry regiment (about 300 men) was assigned to secure the Nomonhan district and enforce stringent border defense measures.

With the return of the Azuma Detachment to Hailar on the night of 16 May, Kwantung Army Headquarters considered that the Nomonhan Incident had been virtually brought to a close. Reports were soon received, however, that enemy troops had again crossed to the right bank of the Halha River as soon as the Azuma Detachment had pulled out.

The 23d Division now formed the Yamagata Detachment and dispatched it to Kanchuerhmiao, to destroy the enemy. The task force of Col. Takemitsu Yamagata, the 64th Regiment Commander, consisted of the following elements:

- Regtl Hq
- 1 inf bn
- 1 rgtl gun co (4 mt guns)
- Azuma Recon Unit (1 cav trp and 1 tk co)

The division's senior officers for operations (Lt. Col. Murata) and for logistics (Capt. Ito) were ordered to accompany the Yamagata Detachment, for liaison purposes.

Army Actions

At about the time that the Yamagata Detachment was formed, Kwantung Army Headquarters held the following views concerning a settlement of the Nomonhan Incident:

(1) Even if the enemy crosses the frontier, friendly troops should not be dispatched immediately without intensive preparations, lest a surprise attack should fail. Past experience indicates that friendly forces are liable to be lured into danger by the enemy's repeated violations of the border at the same point, as at Nomonhan.

(2) From the overall standpoint, the advance of Outer Mongolian horsemen to the right bank of the Halha River poses no serious threat.

(3) It is therefore advisable to adopt a wait-and-see attitude for the time being; a large-scale surprise attack should be launched only if the situation warrants.

Within the above context, Kwantung Army Headquarters immediately transmitted instructions to the 23d Division Chief of Staff, cautioning him not to take hasty action.

Meanwhile, Col. Ouchi, the Chief of Staff of the 23d Division,

had already left to attend staff conferences at Kwantung Army Headquarters. At Hsinking, Maj. Gen. Yano (Deputy Chief of Staff, Kwantung Army) and Col. Terada (Chief, Operations Section) fully briefed him concerning Army intentions, as well as the 23d Division's most recent action in dispatching the Yamagata Detachment toward Kanchu-erhmiao. Col. Ouchi thereupon stated:

The instructions which I left with the Division's operational staff when I left Hailar conform precisely with the intentions of the Kwantung Army. It therefore appears that after my departure the Division revised its plans and decided to dispatch troops forward immediately.

Col. Ouchi promptly dispatched a radio message to the Division Commander at Hailar, to the following effect:

After conferences at Army Headquarters in regard to the settlement of the Incident, I reached the following conclusions:

(1) In settling the affair, the Kwantung Army has concrete plans, as follows: For the time being, Manchukuoan Army troops will keep an eye upon the Outer Mongolians operating near Nomonhan, and will try to lure them onto Manchurian territory. Japanese forces at Hailar will maintain surveillance over the situation. Upon verification of a border violation by the bulk of Outer Mongolian forces, the Kwantung Army will dispatch troops, contact the enemy, and annihilate him within friendly territory. According to this outlook, it can be expected that enemy elements will occupy border regions for a considerable period; but this is permissible from the overall strategic point of view.

(2) If the Yamagata Detachment has already departed, it is deemed appropriate that the force accomplish its mission and return to Hailar forthwith.

(3) The gallant combat performance of our air units is highly commendable. However, in view of the extremely high esprit of the officers and men in the air units at Hailar, it is considered necessary (within the broader frame of reference) to exercise a certain degree of control over their actions, depending upon the situation.

I regret that my views run quite contrary to your plans, but entreat your understanding, since my statements are based upon exhaustive deliberations at Kwantung Army Headquarters.

Col. Ouchi's message to Gen. Komatsubara clearly indicates the nature of Kwantung Army Headquarters' resolve to settle the Nomonhan Incident. It was imperative to prepare for the worst, however, inasmuch as enemy aircraft were repeatedly violating Manchukuoan air space, on reconnaissance missions. Reports were also received that Soviet air units were deployed at Tamsag. To cope with the dire eventuality that the enemy might seek to enlarge the Nomonhan Incident, Kwantung Army Headquarters ordered the following aerial reinforcements dispatched to the Hailar area, on 23 May:

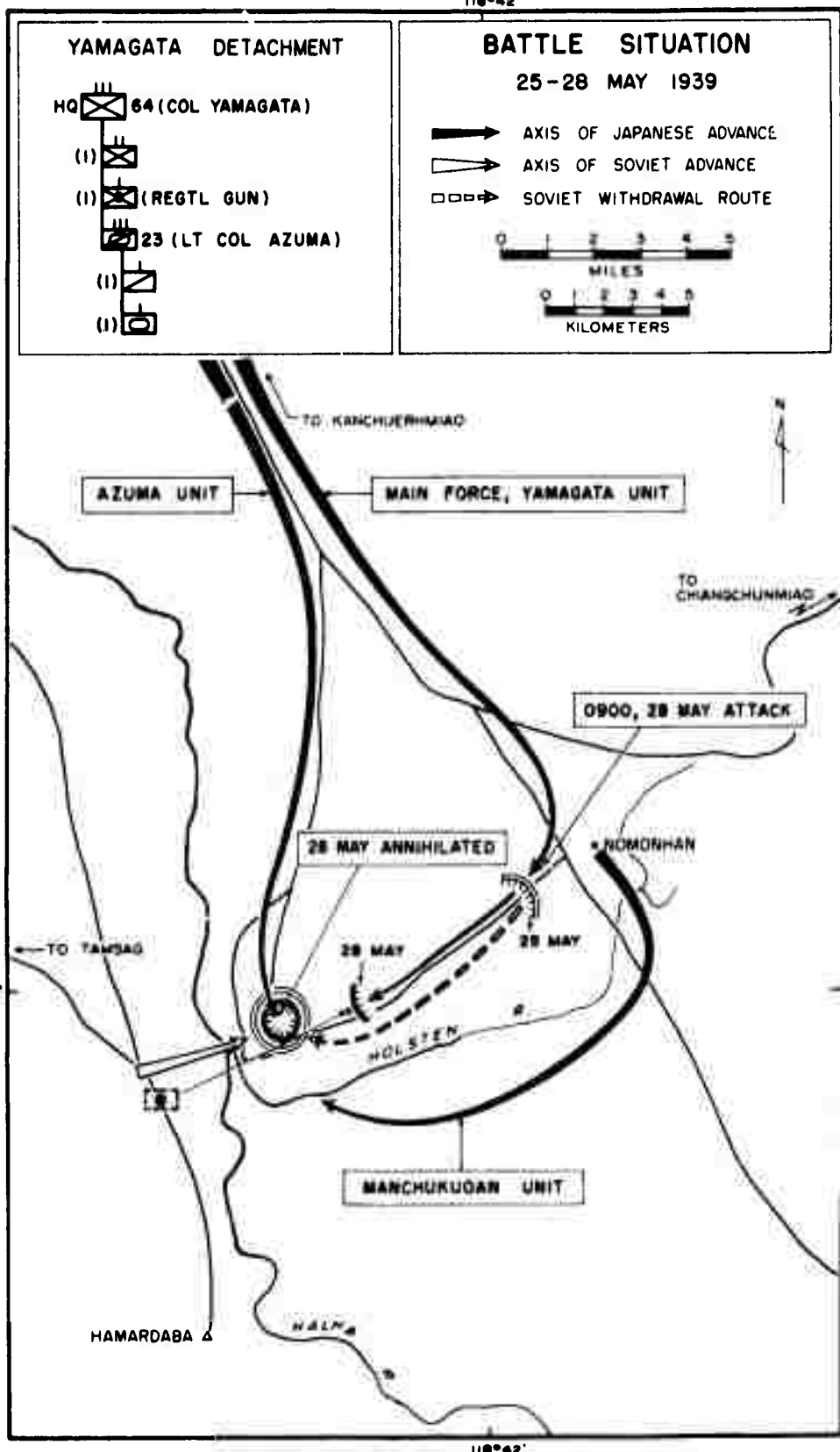
12th Air Brig Hq
11th Air Regt (less 2 sqs): actual strength, 2 ftr sqs
22d Airfield Bn: main force
2d Air Intell Unit: elms

Battle of 28 May

On 23 May, Col. Yamagata concentrated his Detachment at Kan-chuerhmiao and dispatched squad-size elements to Nomonhan, where

7. Air intelligence units, ground-based, performed radio intelligence functions such as monitoring, intercepts, etc. - Ed.

MAP NO. 13



they were to contact the Manchukuoan Army border garrison unit and conduct front-line reconnaissance. Inspection revealed that the enemy had constructed a bridge across the Halha River north of its confluence with the Holsten. Outer Mongolian positions were sighted on the dunes about 1,000 meters west of Nomonhan. Acting upon the intelligence received, Col. Yamagata immediately decided to attack the enemy, and assigned the following missions to the Detachments:

1. The reconnaissance regiment will push toward the bridge and cut off enemy retreat.
2. The infantry battalion will attack enemy positions, from the direction of Nomonhan.
3. The regimental gun company will support the infantry battalion's assault.
4. Manchukuoan Army forces will cut off the enemy's withdrawal, from the south bank of the Holsten River.

During the evening of 27 May, the Yamagata Detachment moved forward from the vicinity of Kanchuerhmiao (see Map No. 13). By next morning the task force had reached the front and immediately launched an attack. As planned, the reconnaissance regiment penetrated the presumed route of retreat of the main enemy force, and drove forward in the direction of the bridge. Contact with the unit was thereafter lost.

Meanwhile, since about 0900 hours on the 28th, the infantry battalion assigned to the Yamagata Detachment had been attacking the enemy, who lost his positions near Nomonhan and fell back toward the Halha. The battalion's further advance was checked, however, by enemy artillery fire from the left shore, whereupon the Japanese dug in on the dunes 1,500 meters east of the river.

Futile Relief Expedition (28/29 May)

Kwantung Army Headquarters had sent an operational staff officer, Maj. Masanobu Tsuji, to maintain liaison with the 23d Division. Arriving at Hailar about noon on 28 May, Maj. Tsuji proceeded to contact the Division Commander and his staff, but was unable to derive a complete picture of the front-line combat situation. The Army liaison officer therefore arranged for a divisional "Moth"⁸ (light scout plane) to fly him to the Nomonhan area, where he landed on the grassy plains at about 1700 hours on the same day. Maj. Tsuji learned the fate of the Asuma Detachment from four blood-spattered, wounded survivors (one intendants officer and three enlisted men)⁹ who had escaped from the debacle. The entire reconnaissance regiment had, since morning, been surrounded by an overwhelming force

8. See Photograph No. 4, Part 4, Vol. III, Japanese Studies on Manchuria, for an example of Japanese field use of light aircraft during the Nomonhan Incident. - Ed.

9. Then-Maj. Masanobu Tsuji describes these experiences in his book entitled Nomonhan (Tokyo, 1950), p. 85ff. - Ed.

of enemy armor. Hemmed in on a sand dune north of the bridge across the Halha, the unit was by now on the verge of annihilation.

Taking a truck abandoned on the field, Maj. Tsuji immediately drove across the sand dunes toward the command post of the Yamagata Detachment. The remains of Outer Mongolian horsemen and the burning hulks of enemy tanks littered the ground -- a grisly sight. Enemy shells were still falling. En route to his destination, Maj. Tsuji was attacked by enemy armor, but he just managed to reach the Yamagata Detachment Headquarters as the sun was setting over the grassy steppes.

The officers and men of the Yamagata force appeared strained and anxious. Col. Yamagata himself briefed Maj. Tsuji concerning the latest battle developments and his own intentions, as follows:

No measures can be taken because it is utterly impossible to establish contact with the Azuma Detachment, which presumably has penetrated too far and has been annihilated. The Yamagata Detachment will secure its present positions, while endeavoring to restore contact with the Azuma Detachment as soon as possible by the dispatch of several patrols.

Maj. Tsuji urged the colonel and the staff officers (Murata and Ito) to launch a surprise attack that night, with the entire strength of the Detachment. If any of the Azuma task force were still alive, they must be rescued; or if they were all dead, their bodies must be recovered, argued Tsuji. Upon the advice of the Kwantung Army staff officer, Col. Yamagata finally decided to carry out a night attack

with about three infantry companies in column formation, leaving behind the regimental colors, all heavy weapons, and a guard platoon.

Toward the left bank of the Halha River, enemy flashlights could often be seen blinking in the night. All gunfire had ceased and the battlefield lay still. The relief force pushed westward across the dunes, guided by the stars. No trace of the doomed Azuma Detachment was found, although the Halha River already loomed ahead; nor was contact made with enemy troops.

By 0300 hours on the 29th, the task force was about to abandon its march and return to the command post, when someone detected a putrid odor. Up on a sand dune, dead Japanese cavalry horses were lying on their backs. Nearby, about 200 Japanese officers and men had fallen in a circle. Aboard a half-burned truck, 20 corpses lay scorched and blackened (presumably from flaming fuel hurled by the enemy). Almost the entire Azuma Detachment (including its commander) had been scorched to death.

Reconstruction of the battle suggested that the Azuma Regiment had cut deeply across the route of withdrawal of the enemy force which had been attacked by the Japanese infantry battalion striking from Nomonhan. Like a stag at bay, the retreating enemy had smashed back at the Azuma force, which was caught in a vise by other hostile troops who had crossed from the left bank of the Halha River. Judging from the number of track marks on the battlefield, it appeared that at least 30 or 40 enemy tanks had joined in the assault.

Rough estimates indicated that the Azuma Detachment may have inflicted 100 troop casualties upon the enemy, in addition to knocking out perhaps five light armored cars and ten light tanks. The Japanese themselves lost about 200 officers and men, including the commander (as we have seen), plus ten tankettes.

The Yamagata force proceeded to recover all of the slain, assigning two men per corpse. Teams also collected weapons strewn over the battlefield. The whole force then returned to its point of departure by 0500 hours on the 29th. When the last of the 200 bodies had been put down behind a sand dune at the Yamagata Detachment positions, dawn was breaking; whereupon the enemy began to hurl an intensive artillery bombardment from the left bank of the Halha. Other hostile elements still held a bridgehead east of the river.

The 23d Division now sent up reinforcements to the Yamagata Detachment: two mountain artillery batteries and one antitank gun company. At dawn on 31 May, these forces silenced enemy artillery positions on the left shore of the Halha River. The Yamagata force was thereupon ordered to withdraw from the front, assemble near Kanchuermiao that night, and remain alerted.

Critique of Actions. 28-29 May

The 23d Division was not only new but also lacked command cohesion and esprit de corps. When the first phase of the Nomonhan Incident broke out, the division possessed very meager combat effec-

tiveness; Kwantung Army Headquarters could expect little from it in the face of elite Soviet Army forces. In particular, the 23d Division manifested neither close co-ordination nor teamwork at the tactical level -- a primary cause of the tragic annihilation of the Asuma Regiment.

Division Commander Komatsubara felt keen responsibility for the Yamagata Detachment's failure to rescue its task force. Left to its fate, the Asuma Detachment could only await eventual destruction. Gen. Komatsubara afterward admonished each of his subordinate commanders.

The 23d Division lacked antitank preparation, since its sole mission appeared to be the repulse of Outer Mongolian horsemen. No thought was given to the possibility that the Mongol cavalry would employ tank forces in large numbers. It was negligence on the part of the Division Commander not to have dispatched sufficient artillery and antitank strength. The loss of the entire Asuma Regiment may be directly attributed to the absence of unit training in anti-tank combat; and to the lack of adequate AT weapons.

Soviet Version of Events, May 1939

Soviet military data shed light on their actions during the first phase of the Nomonhan Incident. In particular, it is possible to differentiate between the activities of the Russians and of the Outer Mongolians in combat against the Japanese. Nevertheless, it

must always be borne in mind that the Soviets claimed that the frontier lay 20-25 kilometers east of the Halha River [Khalkhin-Gol], which the Japanese asserted was the border line of Manchukuo in the Nomonhan area. Under these circumstances, Soviet charges of border violations do not necessarily mean that Japanese forces crossed the left bank of the Halha.

Maj. A. E. Bykov, the Soviet Army officer commanding the first Russian troops which participated in the fighting at Nomonhan, has¹⁰ presented the following version of the initial actions:

In 1939, I served in the Soviet forces on the territory of the Mongolian People's Republic. At that time I commanded a mechanized rifle battalion of the 11th Tank Brigade stationed in the town of Underhan [Undur Khan].

On 1 March 1939, Maj. Gen. Yakovlev, the brigade commander, put me in charge of a mixed detachment and ordered me to march with the detachment to the area of the Mongolian town of Tamsag-Bulak, 120-130 kms. west of the [Halha] River. ... The purpose of having the Soviet mixed detachment in that area was to prevent [Japanese] actions directed against the [7th Mongolian Frontier Guards].

My mechanized rifle battalion (three motorized infantry companies) was reinforced with an armored car company (16 armored cars, type BA-6), with a battery of 76-mm. self-propelled guns (four pieces, type SU-76), and with a battery of 122-mm. howitzers. [I also had] one battery of 45-mm. guns (four pieces) and a reconnaissance platoon (5 armored cars). ... There were 1,200 officers and men in my unit.

10. Based upon affidavit and examination of Bykov, IMTFE Transcript, 27 Jan 48, pp. 38,361-68, 38,373. - Ed.

On 5 March 1939, the detachment arrived in the area of Tamsag-Bulak and was stationed there. ...East of the town there were neither Mongolian nor Soviet regular troops, but only Mongolian border guard outposts.

...On the night of 14/15 May 1939, the headquarters of the 6th Mongolian Cavalry Division [stationed at Tamsag] received a report from the 7th Border Guard outpost to the effect that on 11 May a Japanese-Manchurian cavalry unit more than 200 men strong crossed the border in the Nomonhan area and advanced 15-18 kms. into Mongolian territory. In a clash with that unit, several Mongolian border guards were killed. On 12 May 1939, border guard reserves drove the [enemy] into Manchurian territory.

However, on 14 May 1939, up to two squadrons of Japanese and Manchurians again crossed the border and advanced into Mongolian territory on the eastern bank of the Halha River, driving back the border guards. In connection with the report, the commander of the 6th Mongolian Division and I decided to go to the location of the 7th Border Guard outpost to investigate the situation.

About 35-40 kms. from the 7th Mongolian Border Guard outpost, we came across two mounted tsiriks (soldiers) riding at top speed to the west; we stopped them. The tsiriks were carrying a message from the chief of the outpost; i. e., that five Japanese single-engined dive bombers raided the outpost and made four bombing runs. During the first two runs, the outpost was bombed; during the last two it was strafed.

We went to the outpost at once and I myself saw the damage inflicted by the Japanese. Three soldiers were killed and 25 were wounded. ...On the same day we returned to Tamsag (by motorcar). I put in a through call to corps headquarters in Ulan Bator and reported what had happened.

On 18 May, by order of corps headquarters, my reconnaissance platoon went to the Hamardaba mountain range, on the western bank of the Halha River, together with the 6th Mongolian Cavalry Division. The first minor clash of Soviet troops with enemy forces took place on 22 or 23 May when, in accordance with instructions from corps headquarters, I ordered my reconnaissance platoon to cross the Halha River to its eastern bank, to conduct reconnaissance in force....

The reconnaissance platoon went 7-8 kilometers to the east, without hindrance. Twelve or thirteen kms. from the state border line as claimed by the Russians, the platoon was fired upon by the enemy, was surrounded, and fought its way out of the encirclement, withdrawing to the western bank of the Halha River.

My detachment arrived at the river on 24 May 1939. In accordance with orders, on 26 May, I put across the river (to its eastern bank) two mechanized rifle companies, a battery of 45-mm. guns, and a few armored cars. On 27 May, I transferred our command post to the eastern bank of the Halha River, about 9-10 kms. from the state border line as claimed by the Russians.

On 26 and 27 May, Soviet-Mongolian units had no battle contacts with the Japanese. We thought that the border incident was closed. However, on the night of 27/28 May, the Japanese took the offensive, which began at about 0300 hours. As I know from the testimony of prisoners, the offensive was conducted by a group (which was a part of the 23d Division, and of the Bargut Manchurian Mongol cavalry) under the command of Col. Yamagata, commander of the 64th Infantry Regiment, 23d Division.

The group contained a part of the 64th Infantry Regiment, a reconnaissance detachment of the 23d Division under the command of Lt. Col. Azuma, a motorized company under the command of Capt. Kawano, the 8th 23d Cavalry Regiment, and units of the 1st and 7th Bargut cavalry units.

The Japanese tried to outflank the Soviet troops from the left, to appear in our rear and get to the Halha River crossing, thus cutting off our way of retreat. In the course of the fighting, my detachment lost 65-70 officers and men. At the end of 28 May, a regiment of the Soviet Army 36th Infantry Division, under command of Maj. Remizov, arrived at the Halha River; the regiment was thrown into action from the march. This day may be considered as the date of the opening of large-scale hostilities on the Halha River, between the Japanese...and units of the Soviet Army. Prior to 28 May, major clashes between regular troops did not take place. See Map No. 14.

Maj. Bykov adds that on 28 May a Japanese map was captured from the car of Col. Azuma, by the 1st Platoon leader, Sr. Lt. Seminov. Col. Azuma's car was put out of action by the Soviet battery of self-propelled guns, which also knocked out the two Japanese armored cars ¹¹ that guarded the Reconnaissance Regiment Headquarters.

Soviet data on opposing ground strengths during the first phase of the combat at Nomonhan are presented in Table 15.

11. Ibid., pp. 38,370-71. - Ed.

MAP NO. 14

118°42'

ACTIONS OF 28 MAY 39 (SOVIET ARMY MAP)



AM, 28 MAY



CLOSE, 28 MAY



1200, 28 MAY

0 1 2 3 4 5

MILES

0 1 2 3 4 5

KILOMETERS

N



TO KANGHUEBHIAC

ONE BN, 64TH INF REGT

2 SQS, 1ST CAV REGT

NOMONHAN

8TH CAV REGT
AND ONE SQ,
7TH CAV REGT

LT COL AZUMA DET
AND CAPT KOHNO

3D CO, 149TH INF REGT

DUNGUN
OBO

COMPOSITE
CAV SQS

HOLSTEN R.

HALIN R.

47°44'

47°44'

118°42'

SOVIET ARMY DATA ON OPPOSING FORCES,
NOMONHAN, 1st PHASE (MAY 1939)*

	Bayonets [Infantry]	Sabers [Cavalry]	Machine Guns	Guns, 75-mm. & heavier	AT Guns	Tanks	Armored Cars
Soviet- Outer Mongolian forces	668	260	58	14	6	-	39
Japanese forces	1,676	900	75	8	10	1	6-8

* Source: Col. S. N. Shishkin, Khalkhin-Gol (Military Publishing House, Ministry of Defense, Moscow, 1954), Table 1, p. 16.

Table 15

Outer Mongolian Version

According to a Mongolian Army junior lieutenant who commanded the 200-man 7th Frontier Guard outpost near Samburin-Tsagan Nur, the earliest phase of the fighting at Nomonhan developed as follows:

On the night of [10/11] May 1939, a temporary frontier guard patrol (20 men strong), under the command of the outpost's political commissar, was dispatched by me to the area six kms. southwest of Nomonhan-burd Obo. At about 0800 on 11 May, a Japanese Bargut cavalry detachment (about 300 men), armed with machine guns and submachine guns, rifles, and grenades, and accompanied by four trucks, crossed the state frontier [as claimed by the Outer Mongols] in the area of Nomonhan-burd Obo and attacked the frontier guard outpost. During the fighting against the reconnaissance detachments of this unit, a soldier of our frontier guard and one grenadier were killed; a private was wounded, and three horses were killed.

Under the pressure of superior enemy forces, our frontier guard patrol was forced to retreat into Mongolian territory. The Japanese Bargut unit advanced 20 kms. deep into our territory [according to the Mongol contention], but was stopped in the area of Nuren Obo, 18 kms. south of Nomonhan-burd Obo, by our reserve frontier guard unit which arrived at that time. Toward evening on 12 May, [the Japanese were] driven back to their own territory.

On 14 May, in the morning, while being dispatched to the outpost in the area of Lake Samburin-Tsagan Nur, from the frontier guard patrol stationed three kms. west of Nomonhan-burd Obo, I received a report stating that (at about 0500 hours) a Japanese Bargut cavalry unit (600 men strong), with...ten trucks, had crossed the frontier in the Nomonhan area and was moving

12. Based upon affidavit (6 Dec 46) and examination of Maj. Puntsugin Chogdan, *ibid.*, 29 Jan 48, pp. 38,533-36; *ibid.*, 30 Jan 48, pp. 38,562-72. - Ed.

into our territory along the right bank of the Holsten River.

...I went with a group of 40 soldiers to an area 15 kms. southwest of Nomonhan-burd Obo, leaving part of the strength under the command of my deputy for political matters.... We were engaged with vanguard elements of the Japanese Bargut force and, by means of a stubborn mobile defense, I succeeded in slowing down the advance of the enemy. The latter were stopped by frontier guard reserves...and forced to take the defensive.

On 15 May, at about 1000 hours, five Japanese bombers appeared from the east;...they flew 30 kms. into our territory [according to the Outer Mongol claim] and raided our outpost in the vicinity of Lake Samburin-Tsagan Nur. After dropping 65 bombs, the planes machine-gunned our outpost at low level. A medical NCO and two privates were killed; 25 privates were wounded.

At 1700 hours, the frontier guard patrols reported that in the Khulat-ulun Obo [area], two cavalry regiments of Japanese Barguts, accompanied by a tank and seven armored cars, crossed the frontier. Following these cavalry detachments, 90 trucks with Japanese infantry crossed in the same area. They advanced...and joined the Japanese Bargut unit which had crossed on the morning of 14 May and was occupying defensive positions.... Under the pressure of superior enemy forces, our frontier guard reserves were forced to retreat to the western bank of the Halha River; but later (on 28 May), units of the Mongolian Army (about two squadrons of cavalry) came to our assistance, and finally the Japanese Bargut units were thrown back....

...During the period between 15-28 May 1939, our outpost stationed in the vicinity of Lake Samburin-Tsagan Nur was subjected to frequent air raids by the Japanese air forces (several times a day). For instance, on 22 May, during one of the air raids on our outpost, my political deputy...was killed and six frontier guard privates were wounded.

The first Soviet Army units arrived at the scene of the fighting on 23-24 May. The first units (infantry) had armored cars, not tanks. In the beginning, there were no Soviet aircraft but, after large-scale operations commenced, there were planes, tanks, artillery, and infantry. The Soviet Air Force took part in operations on 28-29 May.

Soviet Army data, which amplify the Outer Mongol account of actions in May 1939, state that 300 mounted Japanese and Barguts "violated" the frontier at 0600 hours on 14 May, reaching the eastern bank of the Halha. Next day, at 1245 hours, five Japanese light bombers raided the 7th Frontier Guard outpost of the Outer Mongolians, dropping 52 bombs from a height of 800 meters, and strafing at low altitude. Two Mongols were killed and 19 wounded. Previously, three Japanese planes had conducted aerial reconnaissance. Outer Mongolian border guards observed 700 cavalymen and three trucks carrying Japanese infantry, concentrated on the east bank of the Halha.

Hsinking-Tokyo Liaison

The Japanese Army General Staff was deeply concerned over developments during the first phase of the Nomonhan Incident. The central authorities believed, however, that Kwantung Army Headquarters was conducting matters locally in consonance with the basic policy of localizing the affair, and they seemed to be favoring this course of action. For example, the High Command assigned the 1st Air Regiment (Fighter) to the Kwantung Army on 30 May--an action taken upon the

13. Memorandum of Red Army General Staff Military History Department, 12 Mar 46, Pros. Ex. No. 766, *ibid.*, 16 Oct 46, pp. 7, 846-47. - Ed.

initiative of Tokyo, and not at the specific request of Hsinking. On the same day, the Army General Staff also dispatched the following radio message (No. 547) to Kwantung Army Headquarters:

Congratulations are hereby extended for the great success of the Army at Nomonhan.

In the event that the Outer Mongolian and Soviet armies increase strength in that area, and threaten to invade Manchukuoan territory in the future, rendering it necessary to provide men and equipment to repulse the enemy, Kwantung Army Headquarters is asked to submit requests.

Throughout the first phase of the Nomonhan Incident, the Kwantung Army had been promptly forwarding reports on the combat developments to the High Command authorities. Utmost efforts were made to settle the affair on the spot, and to prevent enlargement of the incident lest forces engaged in China be diverted to Manchuria. In reply to the above-mentioned Army General Staff Radio Message No. 547, Kwantung Army Headquarters dispatched the following message, which clearly illustrates the sincere intentions of the field command:

TO: Assistant Chief of Staff, Japanese Army

FROM: Chief of Staff, Kwantung Army

SUBJECT: Reply to AGS Radio No. 547

1. The Army will strive to avoid disputes requiring protracted confrontation of the enemy, and will plan to inflict heavy losses through the intermittent action of air and mobile ground forces whenever the enemy commits border violations.

2. Judging from the overall situation of the enemy, and from the terrain around Nomonhan, it is estimated that the enemy will not commit very large ground forces in this area. If, however, the enemy reinforces the region, the Army is confident that it can realize its intentions as described in Para. 1 above, by employing the 23d Division, current Army air strength, and all forces under the direct control of this Headquarters.

3. As previously reported, it is not believed that the present incident will result in full-scale war. It is difficult, however, to prevent the outbreak of minor incidents, attributable to the general state of tension existing on both sides, in other areas.

At this time, it is imperative that the Army be immediately supplied with river-crossing materials--the weakest aspect of the Army's operational preparations. It is desired that various types of river-crossing craft be provided, as requested by Staff Officer Hattori during his visit to Tokyo, [prior to the Nomonhan Incident].

In order to get ready for air operations, it is further desired that six mobile aviation repair sections be activated as soon as possible.

When one considers that the entire Japanese combat strength in Manchuria was only one-third that of the Soviet Far Eastern Army forces, and that the enemy was obstinately provoking an increasing number of border incidents, it becomes apparent that reinforcements were desperately required by the Kwantung Army. The requests that the Army High Command furnish only river-crossing equipment and mobile aircraft repair units reflect the Kwantung Army's earnest desire to avoid the diversion of materiel from other elements of the

Japanese Army. In this connection, the Kwantung Army then possessed only enough river-crossing equipment to construct one 50-meter bridge across the Halha River.

According to Lt. Gen. Gun Hashimoto, contemporary Chief of the General Staff Operations Bureau, a joint War Ministry-General Staff committee drafted an "Outline for the Settlement of the Nomonhan
14
Border Incident" (31 May 39), the gist of which follows:

We place confidence in the policy of the Kwantung Army, which is endeavoring to localize the incident by punishing and pulverizing the invading Outer Mongolian and Soviet ground and air forces within the Manchukuoan border by employing elastic military operations. We shall, with the future development of the incident, control operations of the Kwantung Army, and are expecting that Army to terminate hostilities by making the enemy refrain from entering the district north of the Halha River, through his failure in operations.

14. Based upon deposition and statement, ibid., 20 May 47, pp. 22,576-77, 22,595-96. - Ed.

CHAPTER 6

NOMONHAN INCIDENT: 2d PHASE

Situation in Kwantung Army

After the abatement of the first phase of the fighting at Nomonhan, small enemy ground elements still held a bridgehead on the right bank of the Halha, and artillery positions were emplaced on the left shore. Enemy aircraft often conducted reconnaissance flights across the Manchukuoan frontier. Nevertheless, from the point of view of broad strategy, Kwantung Army Headquarters determined to take no countermeasures, although each subordinate army was cautioned to strengthen its defensive preparations.

In mid-June 1939, a high-ranking party left Kwantung Army Headquarters for Sunwu to inspect Fourth Army defenses on the northern front.¹ The group included the Commanding General, Kwantung Army; the Deputy Chief of Staff; the Chief of the Operations Section; and operations staff officers Hattori, Murasawa, and Tsuji. The Army Commander went on to Peian, while the other officers proceeded to inspect the border defenses in the Heiho area. Both parties subsequently returned to Hsinking on the 19th and 20th of the month.

Meanwhile, during the summer of 1939, discussions were undertaken between the Japanese and British governments concerning the

1. The Fourth Army had been activated in June 1938. - Ed.

Japanese blockade of the British (and French) Concessions in Tientsin.² The Kwantung Army authorities were well aware that Japan would have to settle the problems in China while at the same time the situation in Europe was becoming more critical. Under the circumstances, it was highly undesirable to divert troop strength to the Nomonhan area. The Kwantung Army would have to limit itself to holding operations behind the Manchukuoan frontiers.

Recurrence of Incident

Despite Japanese efforts to prevent further outbreaks, the Outer Mongolian and Soviet forces openly increased their troop strength and equipment on a large scale, and proceeded to strengthen their positions. These actions appeared to be part of a strategic design intended to block Japanese settlement of the China Incident; there was even evidence of premeditated aggression on the part of the Soviets.

2. On 14 Jun 39, the Japanese authorities instituted a blockade at Tientsin, with barricades and military search posts; the Foreign Concessions' supplies of food and fuel were largely cut off. The basic, local causes included Japanese demands for the surrender of anti-Japanese "terrorists" operating within the Concessions; and of Nationalist Government silver specie deposited for safekeeping there. According to Sir Robert Craigie, the British Ambassador to Japan, "Information was in our possession showing that the Japanese General Staff had their plans fully laid for a single-handed war with Great Britain and that a powerful faction in the Army favoured war at that time on an issue in which American sympathies were not directly engaged." Behind the Japanese Mask (London, 1946), p. 73.-Ed.

On the morning of 19 June 1939, Kwantung Army Headquarters received the following wire from the 23d Division Commander:

1. Enemy strength has been steadily built up in the Nomonhan area. A number of tanks have attacked and pursued local elements of the Manchukuoan Army. [18 June].

2. Approximately fifteen enemy aircraft have raided the Arshaan area, inflicting considerable losses upon men and horses. [18 June].

3. On 19 June [at dawn], about thirty enemy planes attacked the vicinity of Kanchuerhiao, where they set afire 500 drums of stored gasoline.

Kwantung Army Headquarters had never expected that the enemy would launch a deep penetration into Manchurian territory with forces far exceeding those committed during the first-phase fighting. Nor was it thought that strategic key points like Kanchuerhiao or Arshaan would be bombed. The situation had become undeniably serious, and unless countermeasures were taken, the enemy might drive toward Hailar. In view of his defensive mission, the 23d Division Commander recommended that decisive punitive action be taken.

Staff Actions

The worsening situation forced the Kwantung Army's Operations Section to decide upon countermeasures. On 19 June the operations staff fully deliberated upon steps to be taken, and reached decisions which may be summarized as follows:

The situation at Nomonhan has become so grave that it is now impossible for us to remain passive, without instituting counter-measures. If we undertake no counteraction, the Soviet Army will attack and invade with much larger forces, taking advantage of our passiveness. This, in turn, will only lead the British to doubt our real military strength and will aggravate their attitude toward Japan.

From the experience gained in the first-phase Nomonhan Incident, the Kwantung Army is confident of being able to crush the invading enemy completely. The only way to effect an early settlement of the Incident, and a favorable turn in the Anglo-Japanese talks [concerning the Tientsin blockade], is to counterattack the enemy and demonstrate our power in the North.

In accordance with the preceding estimate of the situation, the 1st Section prepared the following Operational Plan Against Outer Mongolia:

SUMMARY OF OPERATIONAL PLAN
AGAINST OUTER MONGOLIA
(DRAFT)

Operational Policy

Soviet and Mongolian forces which violate the borders in the Nomonhan area will be attacked and annihilated, thus completely frustrating their treacherous designs.

Strength to be Employed

7th Div Hq (CG, Lt. Gen. Noboru Kuniaki)

14th Inf Brig
Two AT cos & two regtl gun cos,
13th Inf Brig
One cav trp
One mixed bn, 7th FA Regt
7th Engr Regt
7th Trans Regt (less mtr trans co)
Sig Unit, 7th Div
Med Unit, 7th Div
Fld Hosp, 7th Div

Inf Gp Hq, 23d Div

One inf regt, two AT Gun cos, & two regtl
gun cos, 23d Div
One engr co, 23d Div
Elms, Med & Sig units, 23d Div

3d & 4th Tk Regts
1st Ind FA Regt (Type 90 fld guns)
1st Mtr Trans Regt (four cos)
Elm, Harbin Spec Svc Agency
One w sup & purification unit
One trac co, Hv FA Regt
10th AA Gun Regt
One rad comm co & one wire comm co, 3d Sig Regt

2d Air Group (main force):

Two recon acft sqs
Three ftr regts
One lt bomber sq
Two hv bomber regts

Operational Outline

1. Prior to the commencement of ground operations, the air group will displace to the area of Hailar and the Arshaan River valley, and will destroy enemy aerial strength when the situation warrants. Air supremacy will be gained.

Advance elements under the command of the 23d Division will secure key points near Kanchuerhiao and Nomonhan, prior to arrival of the main body. They will strive to divert as much enemy strength as possible to the Nomonhan area, while covering friendly air base activities.

2. The bulk of the ground forces will use the Paichengtsu-Arshaan Railroad to concentrate in the Arshaan region. Upon completion of concentration, the main force will then advance to the left bank of the Halha River, from the direction of its upper reaches. They will cut off the enemy's rear; destroy his main artillery forces; advance to the Nomonhan area; and annihilate the foe, from his rear.

Friendly air forces will render all-out support to the ground operation.

3. Special efforts will be made to capture as many prisoners and as much equipment as possible.

4. After the conclusion of the fighting in the Nomonhan area, elements will secure strategic points on the right bank of the Halha River, while the main forces concentrate nearby and watch enemy movements.

5. The air force will deploy as quickly as possible. The commencement of ground operations is scheduled for early July.

6. The bulk of the Manchukuoan Army's Hsingan Division will be placed under the control of the Commanding General, 7th Division, and will cover the concentration of Japanese forces in the Arshaan area, in addition to guarding the rear thereof.

7. Preparations against any eventuality will be taken along the eastern and northern fronts, as well as in the Hunchun sector.

Operational forces available to the Kwantung Army for the execution of its projected plan included the following:

Infantry	Nine bns	
AT weapons	92 guns	
		28 AT guns
		28 mt guns
		12 fld guns
		24 Model 90 fld
		guns /actual
		strength;
		8 pieces/
AA weapons	24 guns	
Motor vehicles	aprx 400	
Tanks	aprx 70	
Engineers	Three cos	
Aircraft	180	
		18 recon acft
		12 lt bombers
		96 ftrs
		54 hv bombers

Thus the strength which the Kwantung Army could employ amounted to the equivalent of one full-strength infantry division plus enough artillery to equip about two divisions. From an overall viewpoint, the combat effectiveness of this force was double that of the peacetime-strength 23d Division and was deemed sufficient to defeat the Outer Mongolian Army plus elements of the Soviet Army (according to contemporary estimates of the enemy situation).

Of particular importance was the fact that the Kwantung Army planned to retain the bulk of the 23d Division at Hailar as a mobile reserve, committed to battle at Nomonhan if necessary. The main body of the 7th Division would be employed in a surprise offensive against the enemy's right flank and rear, from the direction of the upper reaches of the Halha River.

With the benefit of hindsight, we can now see that this projected force might have inflicted far heavier losses upon the enemy than were, in fact, caused by the main force of the 23d Division in combat. The strength to have been committed, however, was insufficient to have annihilated the enemy on the battlefield, as his forces proved much larger than had been anticipated by the Japanese at the time.

Since the Operational Plan Against Outer Mongolia was of great importance, Col. Terada (Chief, Kwantung Army Operations Section) briefed the Chief of Staff himself (Lt. Gen. Isogai), prior to submission of the document for approval by the Commanding General.³ Gen. Isogai gave the following opinion concerning the projected operation:

I recognize the necessity of annihilating enemy forces which commit border violations. To execute such a plan, however, it is imperative that operations be undertaken on a large

3. Maj. Gen. Yano, the Deputy Chief of Staff, was away on a field inspection at the time.

scale. In expediting the actions of the field forces, both the High Command and the Kwantung Army must exert joint efforts under an identical master plan. I therefore suggest that operations be initiated only after approval has been obtained from the Army High Command.

In reply, Col. Terada and his senior operational staff officer, Lt. Col. Hattori, made the following explanation:

The present situation at Nomonhan admits of no delay. It is a matter of urgency to resort to offensive action in the defense of Manchuria; there is no need to obtain prior sanction and direction from the Army High Command. If the central authorities rejected our proposal, and something like the Kanchatzu Incident⁴ develops, it would be extremely regrettable from the point of view of the Kwantung Army command.

Despite further suggestions on the part of Gen. Isogai, to the effect that it would be better to make further studies after the Assistant Chief of Staff had returned, Terada and Hattori continued to insist that the situation was too critical to brook delay. The Chief of Staff finally gave his temporary approval of the Operational Plan Against Outer Mongolia.

Col. Hattori later admitted that he and Col. Terada should have adopted the cool-headed views of Gen. Isogai. At the time, however, the situation appeared critical, and detachment was impossible on the part of staff officers oppressed by the need to

4. The Kanchatzu Incident (Jun-Jul 37) is treated in detail in Chapter 2, Part 1 of the present volume. - Ed.

resort to positive countermeasures. If, in accordance with the suggestion of Gen. Isogai, the Army High Command had first been consulted; and if negotiations had been undertaken for the peaceable settlement of the border dispute, the second phase of the Nomonhan Incident might have been suspended.

Commander's Decision

The Chief of Staff and other officers briefed the Army Commander concerning the projected operational plan. After listening carefully to the explanations, Gen. Ueda solemnly stated:

In order to achieve its mission, the Kwantung Army can launch an attack against the enemy in the vicinity of Nomonhan; but the defense of that locality is the responsibility of the 23d Division. To assign another division commander to handle an incident occurring within the sector assigned to Gen. Komatsubara would imply a loss of confidence in the 23d Division Commander. If I were in Komatsubara's place, I would commit suicide.

Col. Hattori answered that the 7th Division was the best division in Manchuria, while the 23d Division was only a year old and possessed unreliable combat effectiveness, as was seen during the first-phase actions at Nomonhan.

In reply, Gen. Ueda observed that Hattori's explanation was valid from the strategic viewpoint, but that it would violate the principles of command. He then stated that the 23d Division should undertake to handle the Incident, and directed that a study be made of operational routes. The eastern road (Hailar-Chiangchunmiao)

was to be used instead of the Hailar-Kanchuermiao-Chiangchunmiao route--the only one which had been used by the Japanese forces until then.

The draft operational plan was revised as follows:

1. The 23d Division will annihilate enemy forces with its entire strength.

2. The attack will be launched from the area on the left shore of the Halha River.

In place of the main body of the 7th Division, the following unit will assemble in the Handagai area (via the Paichengtzu-Arshaan Railroad) and will be placed under the Commanding General, 23d Division:

Yasuoka Detachment (commanded by Lt. Gen. Masaomi Yasuoka, and built around one infantry regiment of the 7th Division, plus two tank regiments).

Thus the Kwantung Army determined its operational plan for handling the second phase of the Nomonhan Incident. Appropriate orders were issued to the forces involved, and a report was dispatched to the Army General Staff authorities.

At 2140 hours on 19 June, Kwantung Army Headquarters issued Operations Order No.1530, which covered the deployment of aerial strength and matters affecting the ground forces. The order is summarized below:

1. In the Nomonhan area, Outer Mongolian forces have repeatedly invaded the territory of Manchukuo.

On 18 June about 15 planes attacked the Arshaan region, and on the 19th about 30 aircraft attacked the vicinity of Kanchuerhmiao, while powerful enemy infantry, artillery, and mechanized forces were invading the Nomonhan sector.

2. The Kwantung Army will punish and frustrate the provocative actions of the Outer Mongolian Army.

3. The 2d Air Group Commander will concentrate the main body of his forces in the Hailar area; viz., the 7th, 9th, and 12th Air Brigades, consisting of eight fighter, one light bomber, six heavy bomber, and two reconnaissance squadrons. He will further concentrate elements at Arshaan; will search out and shoot down any enemy aircraft which cross the frontier; and will simultaneously make preparations for future offensive operations.

Separate orders will be issued concerning the execution of attacks against enemy air bases. (Remainder omitted.)

4. The Commanding General, 23d Division, will secure strategic points in the border areas: Kanchuerhmiao, the saltern [20 kms. northeast of Amukulang], and Chiangchunmiao. He will use one infantry regiment, two anti-tank gun companies, two regimental gun companies, and one engineer company, all under the command of the Infantry Group; and will cover the ground activities of the 2d Air Group. (Remainder omitted.)

5. As an emergency measure, the Commanding General, 7th Division, will dispatch one infantry battalion and one antitank company to Tepossu, where the units will be placed under the 2d Air Group Commander.

(Items 6-12 omitted).

13. The Senior Military Adviser to the Manchukuoan Government will place Manchukuoan

Army forces stationed in Hsinganpei Province (excluding the Hsingan Division) under the Commanding General, 23d Division.

The Senior Military Adviser will, at the same time, dispatch the bulk of the Hsingan Division to the Arshaan area, in order to guard the Paichengtzu-Arshaan Railroad and cover the activities of the Harbin Special Service Agency.

(Remainder of order omitted).

Next day (20 June), Kwantung Army Staff Officer (Maj.) Haba left for Hailar by plane, to deliver the new orders to the Commanding General, 23d Division.

At 1400 hours on 20 June, Kwantung Army Headquarters issued orders concerning the concentration of troops, in accordance with the revised operational plan:

1. Strong elements of the Outer Mongolian Army have captured Halhamiao. At Tsagan Obo, the 7th Regiment of the Manchukuoan Army appears to have been surrounded on the 19th by enemy forces consisting of about 1,000 troops, 50 tanks, and 10-odd pack guns. No further information has been received.

Enemy strength in the Nomonhan area is estimated at 1,000 men, with ten-odd anti-aircraft guns and the same number of field guns, plus several dozen tanks.

2. To destroy the high-handed Outer Mongolian Army which has crossed the frontiers, the Kwantung Army will prepare for future operations.

3. The 23d Division will prepare combat emergency measures (to be fully completed within ten hours after receipt of the orders).

4. The following combat-alerted reinforcements will be dispatched to Hailar, where they will come under the command of the 23d Division:

7th Div: One inf regt
Two AT gun cos
Two regtl gun cos
One mtr trans co

3d Sig Regt: One wire co
Two rad plats

One mtr trans regt (equipped with the maximum number of personnel and vehicles)

5. The Commanding General, 23d Division, will concentrate the bulk of his organic and attached forces at Chiangchunmiao, in preparation for future operations in the Halha River Valley. At the same time, he will use elements to cover friendly air force ground activities.

The 14th Field Antiaircraft Artillery Gun Unit (3d Division) will be attached to the 23d Division.

6. The below-cited combat-alerted reinforcements will concentrate in the vicinity of Arshaan under the command of Lt. Gen. Yasuoka, 1st Tank Group Commander [Hq: Kungchuling]. Those attached units which are not presently at Kungchuling will come under Gen. Yasuoka's command upon their arrival at Arshaan. The force will be known as the Yasuoka Detachment; Kwantung Army Headquarters Staff Officer (Maj.) Noguchi will be assigned (for liaison purposes).

1st Tk Gp Hq

5

3d Tk Regt

5

4th Tk Regt

5. At Kungchuling, under Gen. Yasuoka's 1st Tk Gp, were the 3d Tk Regt (Col. Yoshimaru; Type 89 med tks, 2 cos, aprx 10 tks ea) and the 4th Tk Regt (Lt. Col. Tamada; Type 95 lt tks, 3 cos, aprx 10 tks ea). - Ed.

1st Indep FA Regt
 One btry, 12th AAA Regt
 24th Engr Regt
 One co, 22d Indep Engr Regt
 One rad plat, 3d Sig Regt
 One trac co, Acheng Hv Arty Regt
 3d Mtr Trans Regt
 (three cos, aprx 40 trks ea)
 Med Unit, 7th Div

7. One infantry battalion and one antitank gun company of the 7th Division (which were to have been placed under the command of the 2d Air Group, in accordance with Kwantung Army Operations Order No. 1530) will immediately secure strategic points near Arshaan, cover the concentration of the main body of the Yasuoka Detachment, and come under the command of that Detachment when it arrives at Arshaan.

8. The Commander of the Yasuoka Detachment will assemble his organic and attached units in the area between Handagai and Arshaan, and will prepare for future operations in the Nomonhan sector, in conjunction with the main forces of the 23d Division. ...

9. In addition to carrying out his above-mentioned duties, the 2d Air Group Commander will institute precautionary measures in the Manchouli area. ...

(Items 10-14 omitted).

6. The town of Acheng is situated southeast of Harbin. - Ed.

In accordance with the revised operational plan, as outlined above, the 23d Division consisted of the following strength:

Infantry units	13 bns
AT weapons	112 guns
	28 AT guns
	24 mt guns
	24 Model 90 fld
	guns [actual
	strength: 8
	pieces]
	36 fld guns
	[Model 38]
AA weapons	24 guns
Engineer units	5 companies
Aircraft.....	180 planes
Motor vehicles (rear echelon).....	aprx 400 trucks
Tanks	aprx 70

The first operational draft plan had thus been increased by four infantry battalions, 20 antitank guns, and two engineer companies, because of the low combat effectiveness of the 23d Division. It should be noted, however, that reserve strength in the Hailar and Manchouli sectors was greatly depleted, based upon a calculated risk: the expectation that enlargement of the incident need not be feared; and the necessity of committing maximum force in battle.

Air Operations

Fighter Interception

During the first phase of the Nomonhan Incident, aerial action had erupted after a Japanese light bomber squadron (five planes) attacked the enemy on the left bank of the Halha River (15 May). Thereafter the tempo of air combat increased daily, involving dog-fights between Japanese and Soviet aircraft. On 20 May, one enemy plane was shot down by a Japanese fighter. By the end of the month, 60 more enemy aircraft were shot down without loss, a fact attributable to the vast superiority of Japanese plane performance (especially fighters) over the Russian models. The high level of skill and morale of the Japanese airmen was manifested in outstanding fashion during the rout of the enemy.

After the end of the first-phase combat at Nomonhan, no Japanese aircraft were in action until 22 June, after new fighting had broken out. Enemy reconnaissance planes therefore were able to fly freely over the border regions. While awaiting orders to take to the air again, friendly air units engaged in maintenance and training, to increase their combat readiness.

On 22 June, when Japanese ground and air preparations for an offensive were well underway, enemy planes flew across the border in greater strength than had ever before been sighted—a total of about 150 aircraft. Upon receipt of orders from the Commanding

General, Kwantung Army, an aerial counteroffensive was immediately launched by Lt. Gen. Tetsuji Giga, the Commander of the 2d Air Group (Advance Hq: Hailar). Japanese fighters intercepted the enemy air squadrons in the skies over Northwest Manchuria and, after furious combat, 56 hostile planes were shot down, at a cost of four.

During the next four days (23-26 June), enemy aircraft which persistently violated Manchukuoan air space were intercepted by Japanese fighters. Since the outbreak of the Nomonhan Incident in May, a total of 147 enemy aircraft had been shot down, but the foe continued to reinforce his air force while, at the same time, Japanese pilots were becoming exhausted from constant combat without rotation or reinforcement. Under the circumstances, the 2d Air Group Commander felt that it was acutely necessary to strike at the enemy's air bases.

Kwantung Army Decisions

Since Japanese air strength, which had controlled the skies during the first phase at Nomonhan, was by now being gradually worn down by attrition while enemy air power was being stepped up, drastic countermeasures appeared necessary against the Soviets. Plans had already been drafted to defeat the enemy on the ground by launching a drive of major proportions. It seemed feasible to stage an air offensive in conjunction with the land effort.

Russian aircraft had penetrated deeply into Manchukuoan air space, attacking bases near Arshaan and Kanchuerhmiao on 18 and 19 June, respectively. Fighter interceptors alone were incapable of frustrating the perfidious Soviet air violations. In addition, as we have seen, Japanese airmen were being exhausted by continuous combat missions. To eradicate enemy air power at its roots, the 2d Air Group repeatedly pressed for an assault upon the air base complex around Tamsag, in Outer Mongolia.

On 19 June, while drafting orders for the positive settlement of the Nomonhan Incident by the 23d Division, the staff officers of the Kwantung Army Headquarters' Operations Section unanimously advised the Chief of Staff to issue simultaneous orders for an aerial offensive. The recommendations were rejected on the basis of possible enemy retaliation. It was therefore decided, as previously mentioned, that the 2d Air Group would intercept and destroy enemy aircraft which crossed the borders, while simultaneously preparing for future offensive operations.

Hostile aerial activity during the next few days increased the necessity for staging countermeasures. On 22 June, the Army Commander, the Chief of Staff, and the Deputy Chief of Staff agreed to launch an air attack upon enemy bases, and the decision was embodied in Kwantung Army Operations Order No.1, which is summarized below:

1000 hours
23 Jun 39
Hsinking

1. The Kwantung Army will immediately destroy the enemy air force stationed in Outer Mongolia.

2. The 2d Air Group Commander will, at an appropriate time, attack air bases near Tamsag, Madat, and Bain Tumen, and destroy enemy aircraft.

Kwantung Army Operations Order No.1 was obviously a major measure, and was derived from an estimate that primary base air fields of the enemy had been established at the previously cited three localities, from which heavy raids had been launched against Kanchuerhmiao and Arshaan. To ensure complete secrecy, the orders for the 2d Air Group Commander were transcribed in written form and, instead of being transmitted by radio, were hand-carried to Hailar by a courier, Lt. Col. Miyoshi of the Army staff. Precautions were taken to limit knowledge of the plan only to Headquarters staff officers.

Operational Planning

To implement plans for the execution of the projected aerial attacks upon Outer Mongolian bases, two Kwantung Army Operations Staff officers (Terada and Hattori) flew to Hailar on 22 June, for conferences at the 23d Division and 2d Air Group headquarters. Col. Terada stated that the ground offensive was scheduled to commence on or about 30 June, and that an aerial assault was to be

mounted secretly, in conjunction with the land effort. Lt. Col. Tadamasa Shimanuki, an operations staff officer at the 2d Air Group, asked that consideration be given to launching the air offensive one to three days prior to X-Day for the ground attack (weather permitting).

Upon his return to Army Headquarters, Col. Terada described Col. Shimanuki's request to the Army Chief of Staff. The latter then wired the Chief of Staff of the 2d Air Group to begin the air attacks on X -1, X -2, or X -3. Next day, however (24 June), the Kwantung Army Chief of Staff received the following telegram from the Deputy Chief of the Japanese Army General Staff:

AGS Rad Msg No. 768
TO: COFS, Kwantung Army
FROM: DCOFS, AGS

1. The policy of the Army General Staff is to prevent the border conflict from spreading. In the course of operations to repel enemy forces invading Manchukuoan territory in the west, it is essential that maximum efforts be made to avoid any fighting on other border fronts, and that no air attacks be mounted against Outer Mongolian territory to the west. It is believed that this policy accords with that of the Kwantung Army.

In particular, the bombing of Outer Mongolian territory is considered improper, as it will lead to the gradual extension of bombing assaults by both sides behind the opposing frontiers, thus prolonging the incident.

2. For operational liaison purposes, Lt. Col. Arisue is being flown to Kwantung Army Headquarters on 25 June.

In view of the Army General Staff's opposition to the air attack, it was highly probable that a formal order cancelling the projected operation would soon be forthcoming, prior to its execution. Kwantung Army Headquarters felt strongly, however, that unless the enemy's air bases were smashed, the conduct of subsequent operations would prove extremely difficult. The air offensive was therefore considered absolutely imperative. Consequently the Army dispatched a wire to the 2d Air Group, with the intention of launching the air attack before countermanding orders could arrive from the Army General Staff in Tokyo.

TO: COFS, 2d Air Gp
FROM: Chief, 1st Sec (Ops)

For various reasons, it has been deemed advantageous to execute Kwantung Army Operations Order No. 1 as soon as possible.

If possible, it is requested that the plan be implemented on 26 June.

Meanwhile, Col. Arisue had encountered delays due to bad weather during his flight from Tokyo, and did not reach Hsinking until 27 June. It was too late by then to reverse matters: the 2d Air Group had already struck Tamsag air base and had destroyed at least 100 Soviet aircraft (0610 hours, 27 June).

Clash of Views

The Kwantung Army's air attack upon Tamsag was carried out against the will of the Army High Command and appears to have

shocked the central authorities. As the Chief of the General Staff Operations Section later stated, the raid against Outer Mongolia (despite its spectacular tactical success) was the basic cause for the cleavage which arose between the hitherto smoothly working Tokyo and Hsinking staffs. The High Command feared that unrestricted use of aircraft would tend to expand a mere border incident into full-scale hostilities although, admittedly, the Kwantung Army had good reasons for wanting to knock out the Soviet air bases across the frontier. Since the Changkufeng Incident in 1938, strict restraints had been imposed upon the commitment of Japanese air strength; yet, "with full knowledge of the restrictions imposed, the Kwantung Army had carried out air raids, intentionally ignoring instructions from the central authorities." The Japanese Government desired to localize the affair, but the situation now appeared to have been aggravated by the "unilateral and defiant" action of the Kwantung Army, elated by its success. Tokyo was worried lest large-scale diversions occur while the Army was tied down in China.⁷

On the night of 27 June, Kwantung Army Headquarters received the following wire:

7. Col. Seijun Inada, Jinbutu-Orai, Feb 56, loc. cit., p. 33; Lt. Gen. Gun Hashimoto, IMFE, Transcript, 20 May 47, p. 22,597. - Ed.

AGS Rad Msg No.797
TO: COFS, Kwantung Army
FROM: DCOFS, AGS

Report was received today concerning bombing of Outer Mongolian territory by your air units in accordance with Kwantung Army Operations Order No.1.

Since this action is in fundamental disagreement with policy which we understood that your Army was taking to settle Incident, it is exceedingly regretted that advance notice of your intent was not received. Needless to say, this matter is attended with such far-reaching consequences that it can by no means be left to your unilateral decision. Hereafter existing policy will be definitely and strictly observed.

It is requested that air attack program be discontinued immediately.

By Order of COFS

Excitement prevailed at Kwantung Army Headquarters, in the aftermath of the raid upon Tamsag and of the subsequent message from the High Command. An immediate wire was transmitted to Tokyo:

TO: DCOFS, AGS
FROM: COFS, Kwantung Army
SUBJECT: Ans AGS Rad Msg No. 797

Basic policy being pursued by this Headquarters for resolution of border incident consists of our effort to contribute to settlement of China Incident by strengthening defenses in North. Requisite actions are being taken to repress enemy activities in their earliest stages, and to crush illegal designs at very outset, until foe bows in complete submission.

There appear to be certain differences of opinion between Army General Staff and this Army in evaluating battlefield situation and measures to be adopted. It is requested that handling of trivial matters in border areas be entrusted to this Army.

From the exchange of messages, it was apparent that an irre-mediabile cleavage of views had arisen between Tokyo and Hsinking. This command clash, in turn, proved to be the greatest stumbling block preventing settlement of the latter phases of the Nomonhan Incident.

Raid on Tamsag

After Gen. Giga's repeated pleas for permission to bomb the enemy air base at Tamsag were finally granted, the 2d Air Group Commander felt a sense of keen responsibility and was firmly resolved to do his utmost to achieve success.

On the day before the raid (26 June), a flight by a headquarters reconnaissance plane disclosed that more than 200 enemy aircraft were based upon Tamsag. It was therefore decided by 2d Air Group Headquarters that the maximum effort should be concentrated against these planes, in the course of a surprise attack to be mounted during the early morning of 27 June. Forecasts indicated that the weather, which had been unfavorable for several days, would clear on the 27th.

The Air Group Commander issued orders for the execution of the raid only to his air brigade commanders and staff, whom he

assembled in his office; all other officers and men were excluded.

Also present were the Kwantung Army Deputy Chief of Staff (Gen. Yano) and two Army Headquarters staff officers (Col. Hattori and Maj. Tsuji). The gist of the attack order follows:

1. Objective: Tamsag Air Base.

2. Time of Attack: On or about 0600 hours, 27 Jun 39.

3. Unit Mission: 7th Air Brigade (CG, Maj. Gen. Hozoji) and 9th Air Brigade (CG, Maj. Gen. Shimono) will bomb Tamsag base at 0600 hours, while entire 12th Air Brigade (CG, Maj. Gen. Azuma) will cover friendly planes in air over Tamsag and will attack enemy aircraft.

4. Number of Aircraft to be Used:

8

20 (?) heavy bombers,
7th Air Brigade;

9

27 heavy bombers, 10
10 (?) light bombers,
9th Air Brigade;

8. Italian heavy bombers, low-wing metal monoplanes; twin-engined; maximum speed 405 k.p.h. at 5,000 m.; cruising range 2,750 kms.; bomb load 1600 kgs.; armed with three machine guns; crew 5. - Ed.

9. Type 97 heavy bombers, mid-wing metal monoplanes; twin-engined; maximum speed 432 k.p.h. at 4,000 m.; cruising range 1,500-3,100 kms.; bomb load 750-1,000 kgs.; armed with three machine guns; crew 4. - Ed.

10. Type 97 light bombers, mid-wing metal monoplanes; single-engined; maximum speed 423 k.p.h. at 4,000 m.; cruising range 1,300-1,950 kms.; bomb load 300-500 kgs.; armed with two machine guns; crew 2. - Ed.

11
about 80 fighters,
12th Air Brigade.

5. Several headquarters reconnaissance planes will be assigned to each air brigade.

The Japanese planes which were to raid Tamsag took off from Hailar at about 0500 hours on the 27th, and flew in tight formation southward past Lake Buir Nor. At 0610 hours, the raiders attacked Tamsag air base, taking the enemy completely by surprise. Daring dogfights raged in the skies over Tamsag, as Japanese fighters battled with those enemy planes that managed to get off the ground. After about twenty minutes of swirling air battles, the raiders flew back to Hailar.

An assessment of the aerial attack upon Tamsag indicated the following results:

Soviet Aircraft Destroyed

Shot down in air fights:	99 (includes 6 probables)
Destroyed on the ground:	25 (" 20 ")
<hr style="width: 10%; margin: 10px auto;"/>	
Total	: 124 (" 26 ") ¹²

11. Type 95 fighters, metal biplanes; single-seaters; single-engined; maximum speed 398 k.p.h. at 4,000 m.; cruising range 2 hours, 45 minutes; two fixed machine guns. Type 97 fighters, low-wing metal monoplanes; single-seaters; single-engined; maximum speed 470 k.p.h. at 3,500 m.; cruising range 775-1,590 kms.; two fixed machine guns. - Ed.

12. According to then-Maj. Takeji Shimanuki, Kwantung Army Hq Operations Section staff officer, a total of 149 Soviet aircraft were destroyed on the ground or in the air. - Ed.

Japanese Losses

Failed to return : 2 fighters and 2 reconnaissance planes

	<u>13</u>
Total	4

Upon receipt of Army General Staff Radio Message No. 797 on the night of the raid upon Tamsag, the 2d Air Group Commander suspended plans for second and third air attacks (upon Madat and Bain Tumen). The air group prepared for future operations, however, and took strict precautions against any Soviet reprisals. Because of the High Command's directives that Outer Mongolian territory must not be bombed, no further Japanese air attacks were staged until the end of August.

High Command Restraints

The news of the Japanese air attack upon Tamsag took the world by surprise. The Army High Command immediately took steps to check the possible expansion of the Nomonhan Incident. IGHQ Army Orders were issued, which imposed restraints upon the authority of the Commanding General, Kwantung Army. The Headquarters at Hsinking received the following message at 1930 hours on 29 June:

13. Maj. Shimanuki (see preceding footnote) states that seven Japanese planes were shot down, and an additional six returned in crippled condition. - Ed.

AGS Rad Msg No. 825
TO: CG, Kwantung Army
FROM: COFS
SUBJ: IGHQ Army Order No. 320, 29 Jun 39

1. Commanding General, Kwantung Army, will be responsible for defense of Manchukuo and Kwantung Leased Territory.

Depending upon situation, areas where boundaries are in dispute with neighboring countries, or where use of troops is tactically unfeasible, need not be defended.

Commanding General, Kwantung Army, will endeavor to localize matters in settlement of border incidents.

2. Chief of Staff will issue detailed directives.

* * * * *

AGS Rad Msg No. 826
TO: CG, Kwantung Army
FROM: COFS, AGS
SUBJ: IGHQ Army Directive No. 491

In accordance with IGHQ Army Order No. 320, Chief of Staff hereby issues following directive regarding settlement of Nomonhan Incident:

1. Ground combat will be limited to border region between Manchukuo and Outer Mongolia, east of Lake Buir Nor.

2. Enemy bases will not be attacked from air.

In elaboration of the order and the directive which had previously been issued, the Deputy Chief of the Japanese Army General Staff immediately transmitted a further radio message:

AGS Rad Msg No. 827
TO: COFS, Kwantung Army
FROM: DCOFS, AGS

1. Regarding border incident: IGHQ Army Order No. 320 and IGHQ Army Directive No. 491 were issued to warn Commanding General, Kwantung Army, that air attacks on Tamsag and Bain Tumen [projected] by Kwantung Army exceeded border lines, and that therefore such action require prior Imperial Sanction, according to this view.

An Imperial Order was thus issued to clarify basic mission of Commanding General, Kwantung Army, and fundamental policy for handling border problems. Detailed IGHQ directive indicates authority of Chief of Staff. Hereafter Kwantung Army must suspend air attacks against enemy bases, in compliance with IGHQ directive.

2. Mission of Commanding General, Kwantung Army (as outlined in IGHQ Army Order No. 320) coincides with that prescribed in AGS Special Order No. 25 (issued in 1932) and in Field Service Regulations of Kwantung Army. Basic idea also coincides with policies heretofore pursued by Kwantung Army in accomplishing its mission.

3. It is regretted that Imperial Sanction could not be obtained to incorporate authority to move troops beyond frontier (as prescribed in Kwantung Army's Principles for Settlement of Soviet-Manchurian Border Disputes¹⁴) into permanent defensive mission of

14. Reference to Kwantung Army Operations Section Order No. 1488, issued in April 1939, wherein it was stated: "If the enemy crosses the frontiers (where boundaries are clearly established), annihilate him without delay, employing strength carefully built up beforehand. To accomplish our missions or to trap or lure Soviet soldiers into Manchurian territory, it is permissible to enter Soviet territory temporarily." (Extract from Para. 2). See Appendix A, Part 1 of the present volume. - Ed.

Kwantung Army. In event that situation of border incident compels such action, this headquarters is pondering favorable consideration of your border actions in so far as possible within limits of our authority.

Within context of above discussion, Para. 1 of IGHQ Army Directive No. 491 is intended to facilitate imminent ground operations planned by Kwantung Army Headquarters.

By Order of Chief of Staff

According to Lt. Gen. Gun Hashimoto, the Army High Command dispatched the chief of the 1st Section (Operations), Col. Inada, to Hsinking on 29 June, to notify the Kwantung Army in person that it should endeavor to limit the ground fighting within the Manchukuo-Mongolia border districts east of Lake Buir Nor, and to discontinue air activities over enemy bases; e.g., the stipulations of IGHQ Army Directive No. 491.¹⁵

15. Affidavit of Gen. Hashimoto, IMTFE, Transcript, 20 May 47, pp. 22,597-98. - Ed.

CHAPTER 7

23d DIVISION IN ACTION

Army Decisions

Prior to the 2d Air Group's spectacular raid upon Tamsag (27 June), the concentration of the 23d Division and of the Yasuoka Detachment was proceeding smoothly. Kwantung Army Headquarters saw many advantages to be derived from a swift follow-up of the air attack upon the enemy bases, and was planning to mount a ground offensive immediately thereafter. According to reports received from the Commanding General, 23d Division, enemy ground forces in the Nomonhan area had been gradually reinforced. On 24 June, some 70 enemy tanks with field and heavy artillery support attacked the front of the Kobayashi Infantry Group near Chiangchunmiao. Under the circumstances, Kwantung Army Headquarters felt that it would be detrimental to react passively, and dispatched the following orders to Gen. Komatsubara on 25 June, two days before the air raid on Tamsag.

Kwantung Army Operations Order No. 12

1500 hours, 25 Jun 39, Hsinking

1. Enemy in Nomonhan area is strengthening his positions.

On 24 June, elements of 23d Division were attacked by about 70 enemy tanks supported by field guns and heavy artillery, in vicinity of Chiangchunmiao. Attack was repulsed same night, and about 13 tanks were knocked out.

Since 22 June, at least 70 enemy aircraft have been shot down.

2. Kwantung Army will annihilate Outer Mongolian forces in Nomonhan area.

3. Commanding General, 23d Division, will annihilate Outer Mongolian troops in Nomonhan area, immediately after completing concentration of main body of division. In order to accomplish his mission, Division Commander may temporarily deploy troops on left bank of Halha River.

23d Division Commander will hereafter assume control over Yasuoka Detachment and Manchukuoan Army Hsingan Division.

4. 2d Air Group Commander will continue with his original mission, and will simultaneously co-operate with 23d Division.

5. Yasuoka Detachment will hereafter be attached to 23d Division.

6. Senior Military Adviser to Manchukuoan Army will instruct Hsingan Division to come under command of 23d Division.

Attack Preparations

There could be no doubt that the 2d Air Group's strike against Tamsag had been a great success: no enemy aircraft were sighted in the skies over Northwest Manchuria for about a week after the raid. Enemy ground forces also became extremely cautious in their movements. The concentration of the 23d Division, the Yasuoka Detachment, and attached units could therefore be carried out unhampered. On 25 June, the Division Commander proceeded to the vicinity of

Chiangchunmiao to assume field command of his forces. The bulk of the troops completed their assembly by 28 June; the entire force, by 30 June.

Since the left bank of the Halha River commands the eastern shore, friendly forces could not easily reconnoiter the enemy situation. In addition, strong enemy elements had already seized positions on the right bank itself, from which they maintained strict surveillance of friendly movements. Enemy interference with friendly reconnaissance activities led the 23d Division Commander to order his units to form several teams, each led by an officer and consisting of two or three expert swimmers. The patrols were ordered to cross the river by night and penetrate the enemy positions. The reports of these reconnaissance teams may be summarized as follows:

1. Wire entanglements have been set up in front of enemy positions on the right bank of the Halha River.

2. Positions are being constructed along the left bank of the river, with forward defenses extending from Komatsu to Hara heights.

3. A strong bridge spans the Halha near its confluence with the Holsten.

4. The Halha River is about 50 meters wide; its banks are easily scaled on either shore, but there is almost no cover.

The 2d Air Group supplemented the ground reconnaissance activities by flying a number of aerial photographic missions. Based upon these mosaics, enemy strength was plotted as of the last

week in June (see Map No. 15). The map indicated that the enemy had concentrated his main forces around Komatsu Heights, where he had established strong positions in depth, linked with the key left-anchor defenses at Hara Heights. The situation behind the enemy's front-line positions could not be clearly determined, although more than ten trucks were apparently moving up troops and supplies daily. Loads and destinations could not be ascertained, however, because of the enemy's excellent camouflage measures.

Intelligence acquired in the course of ground combat generally confirmed air reconnaissance data concerning the deployment of the foe. It was estimated that the enemy troops, who were operating on both banks of the Halha, were planning to put up stubborn resistance. ¹

On 29 June the Deputy Chief of the Kwantung Army (Gen. Yano) and staff officers Hattori and Tsuji arrived at the battle front. ² In their initial plan for attacking the enemy on the Nomonhan front, Kwantung Army Headquarters had been planning (if possible) to move

1. For Outer Mongolian Army version of Japanese reconnaissance forays, 28-30 Jun 39, see DMFE, Transcript, 29 Jan 48, pp. 38,537-41; evidence of Maj. P. Chogdan, 6 Dec 46. At the time of the Nomonhan Incident, Chogdan was a Jr. Lt. in command of an Outer Mongol frontier outpost. - Ed.

2. The Chief of the Operations Bureau, Lt. Gen. Gun Hashimoto, states that he inspected the battle zone, as far as the bridge across the Halha River, on 30 Jun - 1 Jul. Ibid., 20 May 47, pp. 22,604-7. - Ed.

MAP NO. 15

JAPANESE AIR INTELLIGENCE DATA ON SOVIET GROUND FORCES

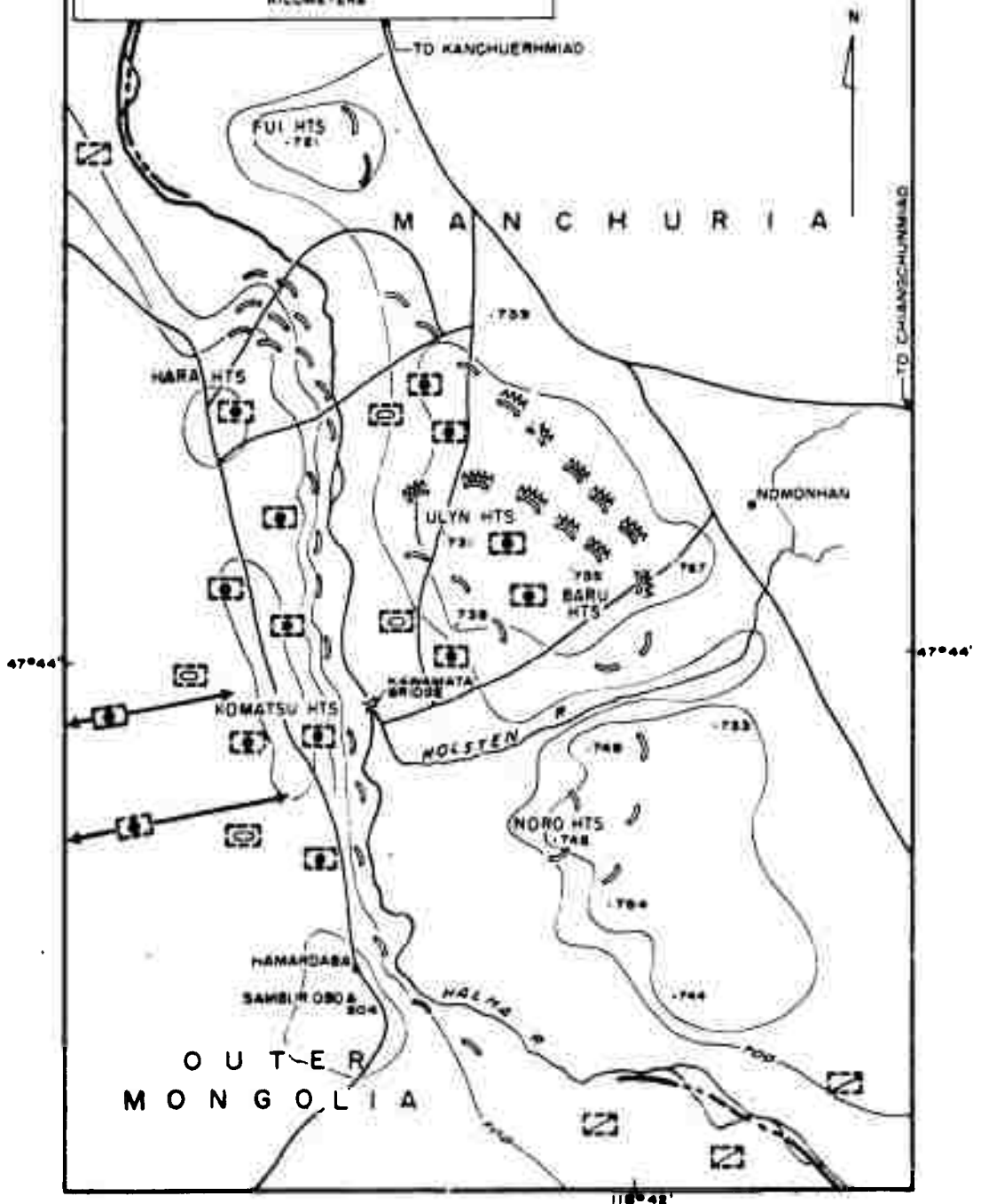
25 JUN 39

HEIGHTS IN METERS



INF DIV (SOVIET) 1
TK BRIG (SOVIET) 1
CAV DIV (OUTER MONGOLIAN) 1
CORPS ARTY (SOVIET) ?
AIRCRAFT (SOVIET) 200

ENEMY POSITION
WIRE ENTANGLEMENT



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troops across the upper reaches of the Halha, and then cut off the enemy's route of retreat on the left bank, by employing the main body of friendly forces. (According to the discarded first plan, the 7th Division was to have advanced to the assembly area from the Arshaan sector, and the 23d Division was to have been merely advised of this action).

Gen. Komatsubara now stated that his reconnaissance data, acquired from ground patrols and aerial photographic missions (previously described), indicated that the division ought to cross the Halha in the area of Fui Heights, north of the Holsten. Close examination of the aerial mosaics by the Kwantung Army staff officers appeared to betray an inherent contradiction in Gen. Komatsubara's recommendations, for the enemy side of the Halha across from Fui Heights seemed to be very powerfully fortified; i. e., in the region of Hara Heights.

To resolve the problem of selecting the projected axis of attack, staff officers Hattori and Tsuji conducted personal aerial reconnaissance in a DeHavilland "Moth," a little scout plane with a cruising speed of 80 kilometers per hour. (That such a vulnerable aircraft could be used over the battle zone amply proves that the 2d Air Group had won complete aerial mastery after the raid on Tamsag). The following conclusions were reached on the basis of the reconnaissance flight:

1. The ostensibly deep positions on Hara Heights (as indicated on the aerial reconnaissance photographs) were nothing more than tank revetments. No troops were deployed on the heights.

2. The enemy positions were not interconnected, and no wire entanglements existed.

3. The site which was most suitable for a river-crossing, and for subsequent vehicular passage, lay along the shores opposite Hara Heights.

The new reconnaissance data, acquired in the course of extremely low-altitude flight, entirely reversed the previous estimates based upon the aerial photographic missions; it was now concluded that Hara Heights was not the most strongly fortified position on the enemy's left flank. The Kwantung Army staff party therefore concurred with Gen. Komatsubara's selection of Hara Heights as the axis of attack for his division. Various infantry, engineer, and artillery unit commanders were subsequently ordered by the Division Commander to conduct aerial reconnaissance flights over the front-line sector where the offensive was to be staged.

On 30 June, the Commanding General, 23d Division, decided the following details of the imminent offensive, based upon his preceding estimate of the situation:

Attack Mission

The main strength of the division will cross the Halha River in the Fui Heights sector; destroy enemy forces on the left bank; and advance via Hara Heights to the vicinity of Komatsu Heights in order to cut off

the enemy's route of retreat; while restraining and defeating the enemy on the right bank.

Troop Deployment

1. Attack force, left bank:

Left wing: 71st Inf Regt	}	Under Inf Gp CG, Maj. Gen. Kobayashi
Right wing: 72d Inf Regt		

Artillery units: Main strength, 23d FA Regt	}	Under direct command, CG, 23d Div
Engineer units: Main strength, 23d Engr Regt		

2. Motorized reserves:

Sumi Regt [26th Inf Regt], 7th Div

3. Attack force, right bank:

Yasuoka Detachment (two tk regts; 64th
Inf Regt, 23d Div;
1st Indep FA Bn;
24th Engr Regt; etc.)

Essentials

1. The force which is to attack the left bank will commence action from the vicinity of Chiangchunmiao at dawn on 1 July; will occupy Fui Heights; and will prepare for subsequent river-crossing operations.

2. The attack units on the right bank will follow behind the force which is to attack the left bank; will concentrate their main strength near Fui Heights; and, advancing from north to south, will attack the enemy on the right bank of the Halha River, commencing 2 July.

3. The force which is to attack the left bank will cross the Halha River during the night of 2 July; advance from the Hara Heights sector; and destroy the enemy on Komatsu Heights. After capturing the Kawamata Bridge near the confluence with the Holsten (so as to cut off the enemy's axis of retreat from the right bank), the attack force on the left bank--in conjunction with friendly attack units on the right shore--will contain the enemy.

4. Artillery units will, at first, cover the advance of the main force of the division, and will then advance to Fui Heights, from which they will support the forces attacking the left bank. They will then move strong elements across the river by the morning of 3 July, in order to furnish direct support for the troops which are attacking on the left shore.

5. Engineer units will be responsible for river-crossing functions.

6. The motorized reserve unit will wait at Chiangchunmiao; then move to the left bank on the morning of 3 July, to exploit successes.

7. The Division Commander will follow the Kobayashi Infantry Group to the left bank, where he will exercise control over the main strength of the division.

The orders issued for the 23d Division offensive were characterized by a certain number of atypical features. For example, Japanese Army field movements were ordinarily carried out at night, but the Fui Heights operation was to be undertaken at dawn on 1 July. This fact is attributable to the Japanese air supremacy at the time; and to the level terrain, which rendered the maintenance of directional azimuths extremely difficult at night.

The attack against enemy forces on the right bank of the Halha was to be initiated on the morning of 2 July in order to shield the river-crossing operations being made against the west shore, to contain superior enemy forces on the right bank, and to facilitate the river-crossing attack. At the same time, a maximum number of enemy troops was to be trapped on the east shore.

It should be noted that the enemy's employment of heavy artillery (which friendly forces lacked) proved extremely deleterious during the subsequent offensive.

Combat Operations

By about 0300 hours on 1 July, the Kobayashi Infantry Group (consisting of the 71st and 72d Infantry Regiments, with the former in the lead) had pushed westward from Chiangchunmiao and reached the vicinity of Lake Hogeï, without making contact with the enemy. (See Map No. 16). Gen. Kobayashi, who was in the van of the advancing columns, was apprehensive over the possibility of an enemy tank attack from his left flank during the day, and accordingly sent elements westward into the district south of the swamps. Advance units reached the area south of Lake Paiyinchakan (some 17 kilometers north of Fui Heights) at about noon, when they were suddenly bombarded by enemy guns from the south. The 71st Infantry Regiment immediately deployed for attack.

The enemy guns numbered seven or eight, and were laying down accurate fire. At first it was difficult to spot the hostile pieces, but after their firing positions were finally detected, the 23d Division artillery silenced them shortly before evening. By this time, it had been established that the fire came from armored vehicles instead of artillery; two tanks were set ablaze. Friendly troops were now concentrated in the sandy area north of Fui Heights, and a night assault was readied against the enemy on Fui Heights. Patrols brought in reports, however, that the enemy appeared to have abandoned his hill positions and had retreated to the left bank of the Halha. When Gen. Kobayashi and the 71st Infantry Regiment stormed the heights on the night of 1 July, the enemy had already withdrawn.

Meanwhile, the Yasuoka Detachment had moved up behind the Kobayashi Infantry Group and assembled east of Fui Heights, during the night of 1 July. Preparations were made for the attack scheduled for dawn on the 2d. (See Map No. 16).

* * * * *

While consolidating its positions on Fui Heights during 2 July, the Kobayashi Infantry Group dispatched elements to attack enemy forces remaining on the right bank of the Halha. The foe put up obstinate resistance but the key objectives were secured shortly after noon.

The Yasuoka Detachment had meanwhile launched its attack during the morning. Sounds of firing gradually intensified from the

direction of the battle field to the southeast.

Gen. Kobayashi ordered the 71st Infantry Regiment to move up to the river line and send its 1st (Fujita) Battalion across the Halha in boats, to secure Hara Heights. Under cover of the battalion, engineers and bridging materiel would be dispatched to the crossing site on the river road by midnight on the 2d. The main strength of the infantry group would cross to the left bank after midnight.

By about 0300 hours on 3 July the entire Fujita Battalion had been rowed across the Halha, an operation which took an hour. The banks were still, seemingly devoid of enemy. Deployed for a night assault, the battalion moved against the enemy positions on Hara Heights, stormed the works, but found no enemy troops. The battalion then set about constructing its own all-around defenses and had completed digging foxholes when about a dozen enemy tanks suddenly struck. Maj. Fujita, the battalion commander, was killed, and the senior company commander then took over the unit. In furious close-quarter combat, two enemy tanks were set afire and one was captured.

Meanwhile the construction of the bridge across the Halha had been completed. The main body of the 71st Infantry Regiment, followed by the 72d Infantry Regiment, pushed across to the left shore just as dawn was breaking over the far-off horizon on the steppes.

When the advance elements of the two Japanese infantry regiments had reached a point about 1,000 meters north of Komatsu Heights, they

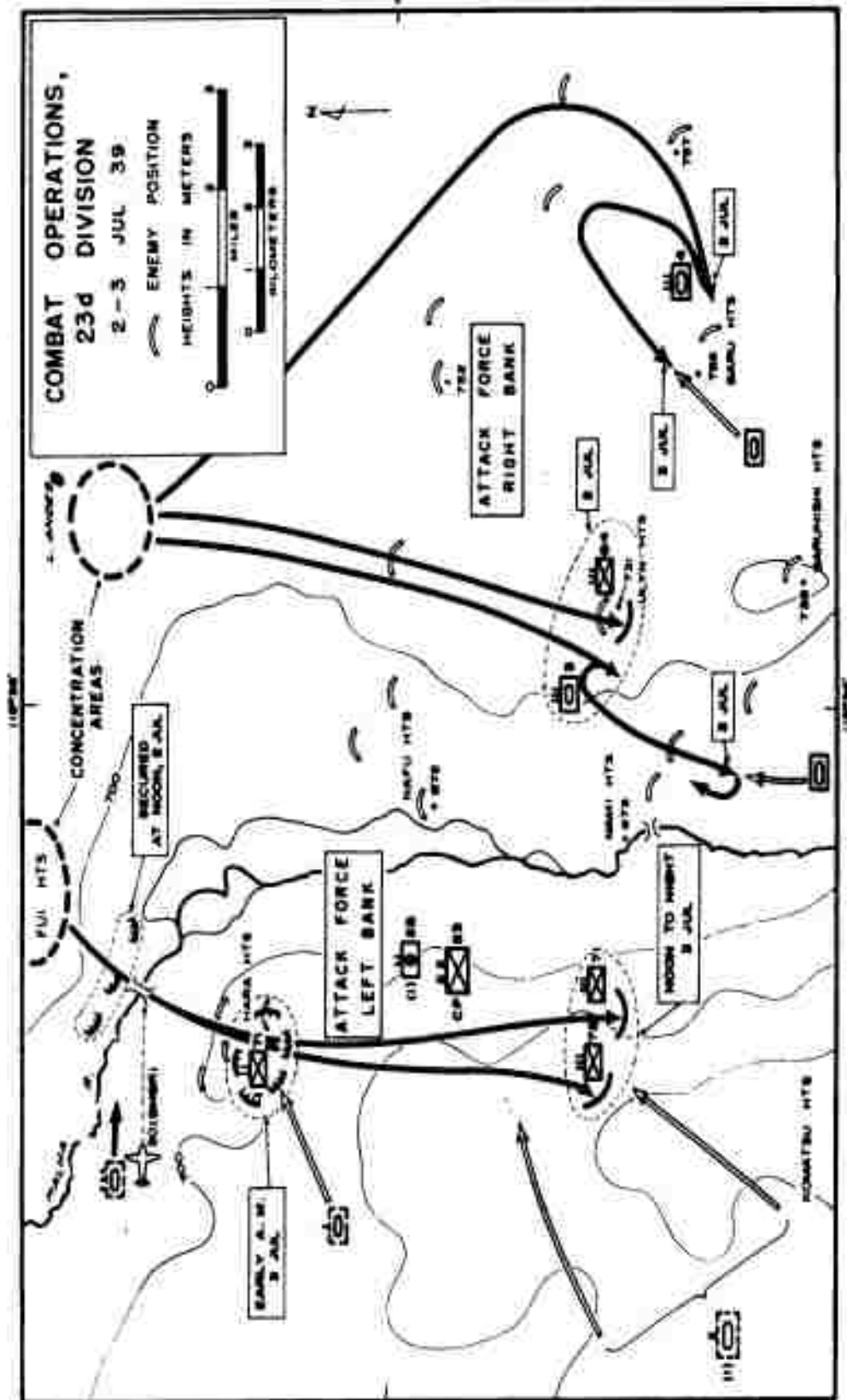
encountered massive forces of enemy armor. Hundreds of Russian tanks counterattacked the front and the flanks, in line and column formations, and in groups of varying size. Confused battles raged everywhere. (See Map No. 17).

As soon as the enemy armor came within a range of 400 meters, Japanese 37-mm. antitank guns opened fire, knocking out tank after tank in succession; almost every shot hit. The few tanks which managed to survive the gunfire and penetrated friendly lines were set afire by incendiary bottles hurled by infantry at close range. With more than half of the tanks knocked out, the crippled enemy forces retreated from the field of battle. As of 1500 hours, no less than 100 enemy tanks were ablaze. Enemy crewmen who crawled out of their burning vehicles were captured or shot.

The Division Commander and his staff officers were moving up by car behind the infantry regiments when about ten enemy tanks closed in from the right flank. Firing at point-blank range, the division artillery was able to knock out several of the tanks. After his narrow escape, Gen. Komatsubara proceeded on to the front.

In the face of bombardment by the "invisible" enemy artillery, and of thrusts by massed armor, the Japanese infantry struggled in the open flatlands. From about noon on 3 July, the situation deteriorated. Although the enemy had lost half of his tanks (about 100, as previously described), he apparently received reinforcements, and launched a counterattack at 1400 hours. Japanese ammunition

MAP NO. 17



supplies were running low.

About 30 Russian bombers attacked the one Japanese bridge across the Halha, while several enemy tanks could be seen moving around the right flank, pushing for the bridge. All in all, the surprise Japanese offensive was failing, while the enemy was recovering.

Relying upon his numerical superiority, and supported by long-range artillery, the foe launched another powerful counterattack. From 1400 to 1600 hours, confused combat again raged across the steppes. The Japanese troops resisted gallantly but, because of insufficient ammunition, could not check the overwhelming enemy forces. In the course of the counteroffensive, the enemy employed more than 200 tanks, 20 field or mountain guns, and more than ten pieces of heavy artillery.

Against the enemy armor, friendly forces on the left bank of the Halha possessed only the following antitank strength:

- 16 AT guns (two AT btries per inf regt)
- 9 regtl guns (mt guns)
- 12 fld guns

No less than fifty more Russian tanks were knocked out, but friendly forces could not achieve the same degree of success which they had had during the morning. Enemy aircraft, which had not appeared over the battle zone until the preceding day (2 July), now outnumbered the Japanese planes on occasion.

From the west bank of the Halha, which dominated the opposite shore, a view could be had of the Kawamata Bridge and its environs. The offensive by the Yasuoka Detachment appeared to have been stalemated.

On the treeless plains, the scorching heat exceeded 100 degrees F. The troops suffered from an acute shortage of water, since they had been able to fill their canteens only once, in the early hours of 3 July, when they had crossed the Halha. Thirsty and exhausted from constant movement and combat, the soldiers were subjected to merciless enemy bombardment.

The Division Commander had planned to envelop the enemy on the right bank by swiftly wiping out the artillery batteries on the opposite side of the river, and then trapping the forces around the Kawamata Bridge. This plan soon proved unfeasible. Although the second major counterattack on the afternoon of the 3d had been repulsed at about 1600 hours by the dogged resistance of the Kobayashi Infantry Group, it was apparent that the strongly reinforced enemy would launch another blow at dawn the next day. The Japanese forces dug in and prepared to assume the defensive.

* * * * *

The 23d Division Commander (Gen. Komatsubara) and his staff officers; the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Kwantung Army (Gen. Yano); and Army staff officers Hattori and Tsuji were all at the front,

observing the situation on both sides of the river: the actions of the Kobayashi Infantry Group on the left, and the Yasuoka Detachment on the right. After the repulse of the afternoon counterattack, various discussions were held concerning the conduct of subsequent operations. Gen. Yano consulted with his two staff members, whereupon the Kwantung Army liaison group unanimously agreed that the main body of the 23d Division should be withdrawn to the right bank of the Halha River, for the following reasons:

1. There were weaknesses in the Japanese logistical system. No materials were available for river-crossing operations; if the one bridge were destroyed, the bulk of the division would be isolated and endangered.

2. In the course of the battles on 3 July, at least half of the enemy's armored strength had been knocked out. It was true that the enemy retreat had unfortunately not been cut off entirely [as had been originally planned], but the antitank destruction should be considered satisfactory, in view of the division's combat effectiveness vis-a-vis the numerically superior enemy.

3. The Division Commander should not be held responsible for the developments.

When Gen. Yano apprised him of the Kwantung Army liaison officers' opinion, Gen. Komatsubara concurred, and immediately ordered his command to prepare to withdraw:

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Summary of 23d Division Orders

1. The Sumi 26th Regiment, which is being held as a motorized reserve force, will occupy and secure Hara Heights, and will cover the withdrawal of the 71st and 72d Regiments and the division artillery.

2. After evacuating all casualties during the evening 3 July, the front-line units will withdraw in the following order: artillery units, 71st Regiment, 72d Regiment. They will cross the bridge across the Halha and assemble in the vicinity of Fui Heights by daybreak on 4 July.

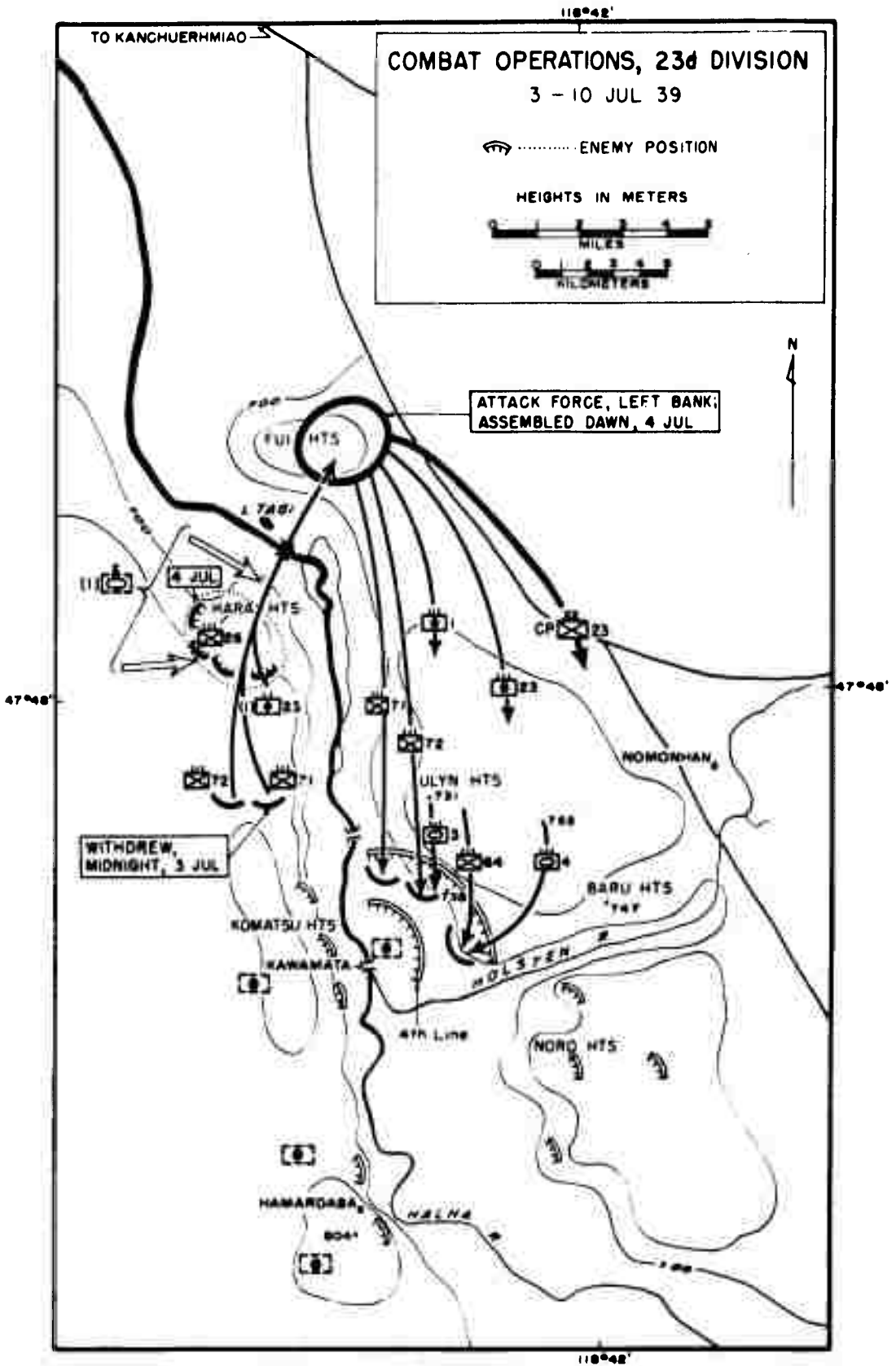
3. The engineer force will secure the bridge, cover the withdrawal of all units, and dismantle the bridge after the Sumi Regiment has crossed it.

If necessary, explosives may be used to destroy the bridge.

The withdrawal of the Kobayashi Infantry Group proceeded smoothly, without interruption from the enemy. By daybreak on 4 July, the main strength of the division had assembled at Fui Heights, as ordered. Throughout the day, the Sumi Regiment held Hara Heights (on the left bank of the Halha) and checked the enemy. In the afternoon, however, the enemy appeared to have realized that the bulk of the Japanese forces west of the river had been withdrawn, for large tank groups then launched offensive action. Fierce combat raged on the Sumi regimental front, while the enemy unleashed a heavy artillery bombardment against Fui Heights (east of the river).

At about 1500 hours an officer from the Sumi Regiment reached

MAP NO. 18



the 23d Division CP at Fui Heights. Reporting the critical battle situation of his regiment, he requested that incendiary bottles and antitank mines be immediately rushed to the unit. Shortly afterwards, a wave of about a dozen enemy aircraft attacked the Division Headquarters, killing the Chief of Staff (Col. Ouchi) and wounding one Kwantung Army operations staff officer (Maj. Gondo).

The Sumi Regiment was scheduled to withdraw from the left bank of the Halha River during the night of 4 July but, since considerable difficulties were anticipated in the process, one of the Kwantung Army operations staff officers (Maj. Tsuji) was dispatched to direct the movement. Meanwhile, the main forces of the 23d Division pushed southward, in the direction of the Holsten River, and prepared to attack enemy positions on the right bank of the Halha.

In the Hara Heights sector, the 1st (Adachi) Battalion of the Sumi Regiment had been cut off by powerful enemy tank units. Considerable casualties were incurred, including the battalion commander. On the night of 4 July, the main strength of the regiment broke through to relieve the isolated battalion. By dawn on the 5th, the entire Sumi Regiment had pulled back to the right bank of the Halha, destroying the bridge behind it. (See Map No. 18).

* * * * *

Prior to the Kobayashi Infantry Group's thrust against the west bank of the Halha River, the Yasuoka Detachment had launched an attack against enemy forces on the eastern shores (morning, 2 July).

With two tank regiments deployed in front, the Detachment had penetrated the enemy defenses and by evening had overrun the first and second lines. Fierce artillery fire was encountered at the third line, however, and heavy losses were suffered.

On the morning of 3 July, large groups of Soviet armor engaged the Yasuoka Detachment inside the enemy positions. The 4th Tank Regiment (light armor) lost about half of its tanks, and the Regimental Commander (Lt. Col. Tamada) was killed in action. At about the same time, on the right flank, the 3d Tank Regiment (medium armor) penetrated the enemy's third-line positions and overran the defenders and the artillery. Pushing on toward the Kawamata Bridge, the 3d Tank Regiment ran into furious opposition, losing about one-third of its tanks outright, in addition to many others immobilized. The foot soldiers - the 64th Infantry Regiment had not been able to keep up with the armor, and the 3d Tank Regiment could no longer proceed. The surviving Japanese tank force fell back to a point facing the enemy main positions, and a stalemate ensued.

The greatest obstacles to Japanese armor encountered during 2 and 3 July were the innumerable piano-wire entanglements set up directly in front of the enemy positions. Almost invisibly fine, the wires would tangle the tank treads of a vehicle and bog it down, whereupon intense artillery fire would smash the immobilized tank; losses were tremendous.

In two days of combat, about 30 Japanese light tanks and ten medium tanks were destroyed. The enemy lost a minimum of 60-70 tanks destroyed, in addition to a heavy toll of infantry (details unknown).

* * * * *

After withdrawing his attack forces from the left bank of the Halha, the 23d Division Commander started moving southward again on the night of 4 July. Next morning, the 71st and 72d Regiments were attacking again, in support of the right flank of the stalemated Yasuoka Detachment. The assaults continued until 10 July; although the division broke through the enemy's main positions, annihilation of the foe proved impossible. On 11 July, held up in front of the enemy's fourth-line positions around the Kawamata Bridge, the 23d Division regrouped, strengthened its defenses, and prepared for another offensive. (See Map No. 18).

3

Account of River-Crossing Operation

The thrust of the 23d Division's Kobayashi Infantry Group against the left bank of the Halha River in early July 1939 represents the only historical evidence of Japanese Army river-crossing operations in combat against the Soviets. At the outset of the

3. Fragmentary account based upon information supplied by engineer Lt. Col. Kazuo Murasawa, Kwantung Army Headquarters operations staff officer at the time of the Nomonhan Incident. - Ed.

second-phase fighting at Nomonhan, Soviet artillery batteries (consisting of over ten long-range 15-cm. guns) shelled Japanese front-line and rear positions, day and night, from heights on the left shore of the Halha. The Russian guns were German-made Rheinmetall pieces, with a range of 25,000 meters (double the range of Japanese 15-cm. artillery). Heavy air attacks against the Russian guns proved ineffective because of dense antiaircraft fire and excellent camouflage.

To drive the Soviets from the commanding heights, and to destroy or capture the enemy artillery positions, Kwantung Army Headquarters decided upon a surprise offensive to be launched thirty kilometers down the Halha from the point where both sides were confronting each other. The site for the crossing was undefended and beyond the range of the Russian heavy artillery, but a bridge would have to be constructed. The river was 80 meters wide and two or three meters deep and the current flowed at a rate of some two meters per second. Bridge-building with standard materials was therefore feasible.

The most difficult problem involved in the river-crossing operation involved the assembly and concealment of bridging supplies, for cover was impossible in the vast, treeless flatlands. It was fortunately known, however, that only two Soviet reconnaissance aircraft conducted regular low-level flights daily, over the projected crossing site, which was far from the flanks of the belligerents.

The Japanese therefore assembled bridging materiel at a point twenty kilometers to the east, in dumps dispersed at 100-200 meter intervals, and camouflaged with grass and straw matting. The Soviet Air Force did not bomb widely dispersed "ordinary" supply dumps, since they were seeking concentrated stores; the bridge materiel was therefore never attacked.

On the eve of the river-crossing operat⁴on, after the Soviet planes had completed their routine reconnaissance flight, the Japanese loaded bridging materials on trucks and moved them 1,500-2,000 meters to the rear of the crossing site. As the vehicles approached the Halha, they crept along stealthily at reduced speed. The materials were unloaded and conveyed to the river bank by bridge-construction engineers and infantrymen. Work started at about 0100 hours and was completed before dawn, whereupon the assault forces crossed to the left shore.

The construction of the bridge and the movements of the main body of the Japanese attack force were conducted under conditions of complete secrecy, and the surprise operation was unhampered by enemy fire. After dawn, however, the two Soviet reconnaissance aircraft appeared, to conduct their routine mission along the Halha.

4. Nowhere does the author (now dead) give dates. Internal evidence suggests that he is referring to the river-crossing operation of the 71st Regiment on 2/3 July. The account is presented only for its value in supplementing the foregoing text. - Ed.

Upon sighting the new bridge, they sped back toward their base; soon afterwards, Soviet armor and infantry appeared, and heavy fighting ensued (see preceding text).

Battle Actions, 26th Infantry Regiment

Col. Shinichiro Sumi, the commander of the 26th Infantry Regiment, 7th Division, has provided a detailed account of his unit's participation in the second-phase fighting around the Halha River:

Stationed at Tsitsihar, the 26th Infantry Regiment, 7th Division, was ordered to reinforce the Komatsubara Force [23d Division]. My unit, consisting of 1,500 officers and men, was ordered to attack the enemy from the rear, at his river-crossing site. Aboard 194 trucks, we were to penetrate into enemy territory across the temporary bridge laid down by our engineers over the Halha River, near Lake Tagi, ten kms. downstream from the crossing.

I had certain misgivings...while riding in the Regimental Headquarters car, at the head of the truck convoy which stretched for more than eight kms. My superiors were quite optimistic and did not take the enemy seriously, for they considered the foe as nothing more than the same Russians who had been ignominiously defeated in the Kanchatzu Incident [1937]. My unit was supplied with rations sufficient only for two [daily] meals per soldier—one of rice, and one of hardtack. As I had once been in charge of collecting intelligence data concerning the Soviet Union, while heading a Special Service Agency in North Manchuria, I

5. Based upon "Nippon no Unmei Ketsushita Hi" (The Day Japan's Fate Was Decided), Syukan Yomiuri, 7 Aug 55, Vol. XIV, pp. 12-19. - Ed.

believed that the situation was not as rosy as my superiors thought, for they were underestimating the strength of the Soviet Army. I feared that we were in for serious trouble.

My fears were due to the fact that our equipment was lamentably inadequate. My regiment had only the following firepower:⁶

6 heavy machine guns;
6 battalion guns [37-mm.];
2 battalion trench mortars

The very trucks we rode in were not Army vehicles, but had been hastily requisitioned from a civilian firm.

We had kampan [satchel charges] for anti-tank defense but they were largely ineffective. In the light of the experience gained during the first phase of the Nomonhan Incident, we prepared "Molotov cocktails" by filling soft-drink and beer bottles with gasoline, and capping them with fuzes—a new improvisation of the Japanese Army.

Thus poorly equipped, we arrived at the river-crossing site on 3 July. Because of the crush of the concentration, our crossing did not progress smoothly. The troops jammed on the engineer bridge (60 x 2.5 m.),⁷ were suddenly strafed by enemy planes. There was no alternative but to push across Maj. Adachi's battalion alone at first. The remainder of the regiment reached the opposite shore before dawn next day (4 July). We deployed to form a second line for the Adachi Battalion.

6. The peacetime regimental T/E called for four 37-mm. AT guns and four 75-mm. mountain guns. - Ed.

7. Cp. Col. Murasawa's account, ante. - Ed.

All the while, we were being subjected to fierce attacks by a group of about 300 enemy tanks. The range was 800 meters, and our infantry guns could score an effective hit only once in three shots. Enemy armor was able to approach before we could get off more than a few rounds, and we lacked the time to continue firing, while the 300 enemy medium tanks roared down upon us and overran our defenses. ...My men frantically hurled Molotov cock-tails at the tanks with deadly accuracy. Tanks burst into flame like matchboxes on fire; I counted 84 enemy tanks knocked out. ...This was the first and last success we ever obtained during the Nomonhan Incident.

The temperature rose to 104 degrees F. on the vast wastelands of Outer Mongolia. At intervals, enemy heavy artillery kept on firing at us from the heights; we could scarcely get some sort of cover by digging foxholes in the sand.

On 5 July, the enemy tanks (which had suffered such great losses from our Molotov cocktails) ceased to advance. Instead they fired randomly at long range, with their hulls buried in the sand, and only their turrets protruding. We sustained heavy casualties from this shelling, as we had no adequate weapons with which to return the fire. About one-third of my men were soon killed or wounded. On 5 July, we commenced to pull back into Manchurian territory. Meanwhile the 64th Infantry Regiment, on the right bank of the Halha, was suffering the same fate as ours, under the intense attack of enemy heavy guns and tanks. The enemy demonstrated his material superiority.

There is no doubt that the Molotov cocktails were successfully used at the beginning, but their effectiveness dwindled thereafter. The original successes were due, I believe, to the fact that the enemy tank engines were overheated from long and fast movements under the

burning sun. The enemy later screened his tanks with wire-netting to shield them against the Molotov cocktails. Soon afterwards, however, the enemy introduced new medium tanks without wire-netting; the latest tanks did not catch fire as easily as they had during the first encounters.

To aggravate matters, the only antitank ground obstacles which we could devise were barricades made of rails or wooden stakes. The enemy, on the other hand, used piano-wire snares for the first time. Once trapped therein, the Japanese light tanks could not move, and were immediately taken under fire by concentrated enemy guns.

Finding that Molotov cocktails were now of no avail, our brave soldiers clung to the turrets of enemy tanks, but it was like flies trying to bite a tortoise. Many times I saw enemy armor fling off our men by revolving the turrets at high speed. The steel plate on the tanks was too thick for our grenades to be effective. Once assaulted by armor, we had no other alternative than to resist as best we could and then hide in our foxholes—a situation which was not peculiar to my regiment alone.

Soviet Army Data

Official Soviet Army sources present data concerning the opposing ground forces committed to the Nomonhan area, as of 2 July. These figures are depicted in Table 16. Map No. 19 presents the Russian version of the actions of 2-5 July, based upon Soviet Army sources.

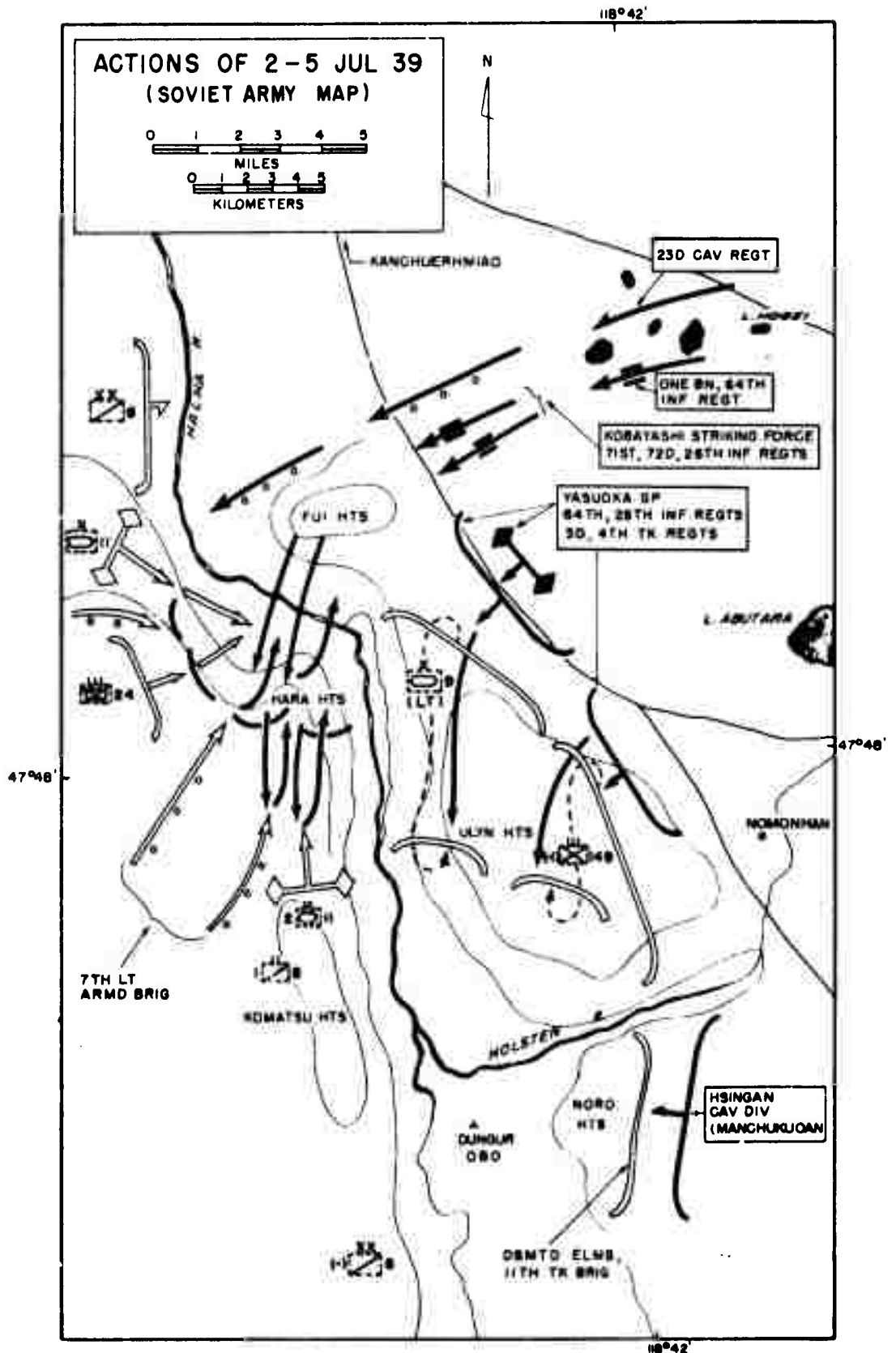
Table 16

Soviet Army Data on Opposing Forces,
Nomonhan, 2 Jul 39*

Belligerent	Inf	Cav	Guns, 75-mm. & above	AT Guns	MGs	Tks	Armd Cars
Soviets- Outer Mongolians	Aprx 11,000	Aprx 1,000	86	23	152	186	266
Japanese	Aprx 20,000	Aprx 4,700	170	98	164	130	6

* Col. S. N. Shishkin, op. cit., Table 2, p. 23. - Ed.

MAP NO. 19



Deactivation of Yasuoka Detachment: An Error

On 6 July, the Kwantung Army Chief of Staff (Gen. Isogai) and the Operations Section Chief (Col. Terada) arrived at 23d Division Headquarters to relieve the Deputy Chief of Staff (Gen. Yano) and staff officers Hattori and Tsuji.

Since a new operational policy was required to guide the subsequent actions of the 23d Division, Kwantung Army Headquarters drafted appropriate orders on 9 July. A major problem which arose in the course of the staff planning concerned the disposition of the Yasuoka Detachment. Its two tank regiments had already lost half of their operational armor, and a high level of combat performance could no longer be expected in future engagements. Moreover, the Detachment Commander (Yasuoka) and the 23d Division Commander (Komatsubara) were both of lieutenant-general rank, which made it inconvenient to subordinate one to the other. Kwantung Army Headquarters therefore decided to return the entire 1st Tank Group to its original duty station.

Orders deactivating the Yasuoka Detachment were wired to the front on 10 July, while the unit was still engaged in action against the enemy. Gen. Yasuoka appeared very disgusted upon receipt of the orders directing him to withdraw while in the midst of combat. The Army Chief of Staff, Gen. Isogai, appeased the commander's wrath, however, and the movement of the Detachment was carried out without difficulty. The text of the Army order follows:

Kwantung Army Operations Order No. 50

0600 hours, 10 Jul 39, Hsinking

1. Main strength of invading Outer Mongolia Army has been annihilated on right bank of Halha River; remnants have withdrawn to left shore.

2. While securing key points along border areas, Kwantung Army will frustrate activities of enemy.

3. Elements of 23d Division will secure Kanchuermiao, Amukulang, Fui Heights, Handagai vicinity, and key points on both sides of Holsten River. Division will assemble its main forces in Nomonhan and Chiangchunmiao areas, and will defeat and exterminate activities of Outer Mongolian Army.

4. Yasuoka Detachment is deactivated effective this date.

Units under command of Yasuoka Detachment (less 1st Tank Brigade Headquarters; 3d and 4th Tank Regiments) will be placed under command of 23d Division.

5. 1st Tank Group will return to its former duty station, via Hailar.

6. 2d Air Group will continue with its original mission.

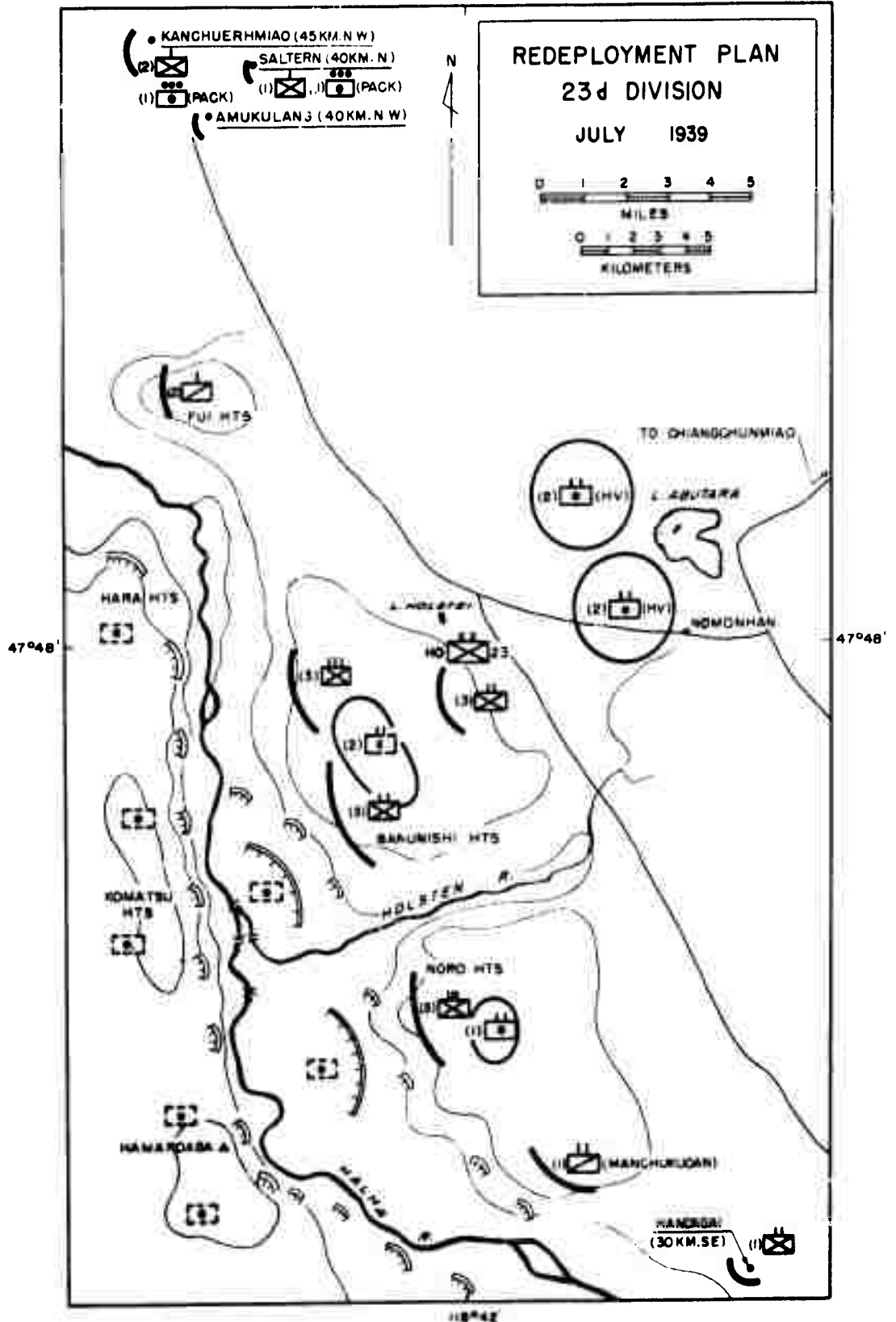
7. (Omitted).

Redeployment of 23d Division

For over ten days the 23d Division had fought well against a numerically superior enemy and had inflicted losses double its own.

MAP NO 20

118°42'



Nevertheless, despite its determined efforts to put an end to the Nomonhan Incident through offensive operations, the division had failed to achieve its anticipated objectives. Protracted combat loomed ahead. It now appeared necessary to redeploy the 23d Division in order to counter future assaults by the foe. (See Map No. 20).

On the left bank of the Halha River, the enemy meanwhile controlled commanding positions, and deployed massively superior artillery strength. Retention of the 23d Division near the river line, in order to destroy the hostile bridgehead on the right shore, would only serve to increase Japanese casualties.

In view of the failure to defeat the enemy during the first offensive, because of inadequate heavy fire power, it was decided to mount a second attack only after the arrival of artillery reinforcements from the homeland. Pursuant to orders issued on 26 June, the 3d Heavy Field Artillery Brigade (consisting of the 1st and 7th Heavy Field Artillery Regiments) had been mobilized in Japan. (See Fig. 16 and Tables 17-20). The heavy artillery units were scheduled to reach the fighting front after 10 July; the second offensive was to be staged on or about 19 July.

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Figure 16

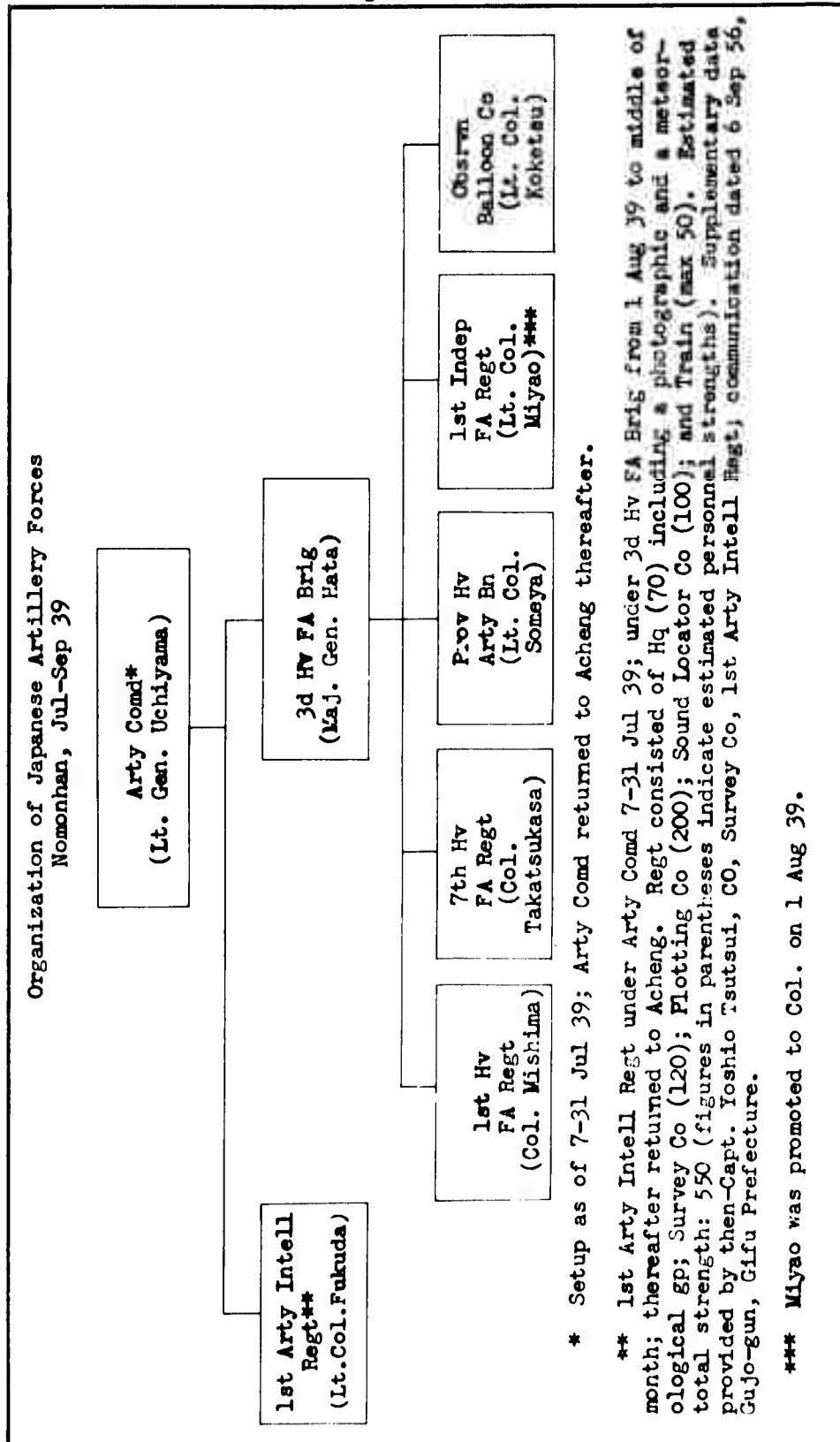


Table 17

**Japanese Artillery Reinforcements
Nomonhan, Jul 39**

Unit	Duty Station	Artillery Types
Arty Comd Hq, Kwantung Army	Acheng, Manchukuo	
Arty Intell Regt*		
3d Hv FA Brig Hq	Ichikawa, Chiba Pref.	
1st Hv FA Regt		15-cm. How
7th Hv FA Regt		10-cm. Gun
1st Indep FA Regt	Kungchuling, Manchukuo	75-mm. Gun
Prov Hv Arty Bn	Mileng, Manchukuo (2 btries)	15-cm. Gun
	Port Arthur, Man- chukuo (1 btry)	" "
Obsrvn Balloon Co	?	(2 balloons)**

* Consisted of headquarters and three companies: sound, flash, survey.

** Includes one reserve balloon.

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Table 18

Organization of 1st Heavy Field Artillery Regiment*

Regtl Hq
 2 Bns: Bn hq, 2 btries,
 bn train ea
 Regtl Train
 Guns (15-cm. how, Model 96):
 4 per btry; tot 16
 Pers: aprx 1,600

Veh	Btry x 4	Bn Train x 2	Bn Hq x 2	Regtl Train	Regtl Hq	Tot
Trac	15 x 4	-	-	40**	-	100**
Trk	7 x 4	10** x 2	13 x 2	20**	10**	104**
Sedan	2 x 4	-	4 x 2	1**	4**	21**
Sidecar	-	-	2 x 2**	-	2**	10**
OP Veh	1 x 4	-	2 x 2	-	2	10
Rep Trk	-	-	-	3**	-	3**

* Organization of 7th Hv FA Regt (equipped with sixteen 10-cm. guns, Model 92) approximately same as that of 1st Hv FA Regt. Battery data corroborated by former-Maj. Gen. Yuzaburo Hata (CG, 3d Hv FA brig); communication to editor, dated Tokyo, 30 Aug 56. - Ed.

** Denotes estimate.

Table 19

Organization of 1st Independent Field Artillery Regiment*

Hq
2 Btries**
Guns (75-mm., Model 90): 4;
tot guns: 8
Regtl Train
Pers: aprx 600

Veh	Btry x 2	Hq	Regtl Train	Tot
Trac	14 x 2	-	-	28
Trk	10 x 2	3	20	43
Sidecar	2 x 2	4	-	8
Rep Trk	-	-	3	3
Tankette	-	2	-	2
OP Veh	1 x 2	2	-	4

* Data provided by then-Col. Kan Miyao, unit CO; communication to editor, dated 6 Aug 56.

** 2d Btry in North China.

Table 20

Organization of Provisional Heavy Artillery Battalion

Bn Hq
 3 btries
 Bn Train
 Guns (15-cm. Model 89):
 2 per btry; tot 6
 Pers: aprx 600

Veh	Btry x 3	Hq	Bn Train	Tot
Trac	5 x 3	-	12	27
Trk	10 x 3	3	12	45
Sedan	-	2	1	3
Rep Trk	-	-	3	3
OP Veh	1 x 3	2	-	5
Tlr	-	-	12	12

NOTE: Figures represent estimates.

CHAPTER 8

AGGRAVATION OF INCIDENT

Emergency Measures and Air Defense

Danger lurked in the mere collection of intelligence data based only upon general estimates that the U.S.S.R. would not attempt full-scale hostilities against Japan. From the beginning of July, Kwantung Army Headquarters staff sections therefore pursued a more comprehensive research and analysis program vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. By mid-July, it was determined that the Soviet Far Eastern Air Force had already been mobilized.

The Kwantung Army had previously felt the need to extend anti-Soviet security measures from the local sector at Nomonhan to every border zone. Judging from visual reconnaissance reports received from lookout posts along the eastern borders of Manchuria, the Russians appeared to have completed the massing of troops in every forward region.

In the midst of these developments, the Soviet Air Force struck at Fulaerhchi (west of Tsitsihar), deep inside Manchukuo. At 0300 hours on 16 July, eight bombs were dropped on the railroad bridge; although only negligible physical damage was inflicted, the psychological effects of the raid were great. Kwantung Army Headquarters concluded that it was necessary to institute combat-alert measures and to issue air defense orders, in order to

strengthen combat readiness throughout Manchukuo. The thinking upon which these actions were based may be summarized as follows:

1. Since the Soviet Union is undertaking positive actions such as mobilization, and is strengthening combat preparations on all fronts, it is possible that a large-scale invasion may be carried out across the eastern borders, etc., depending upon changes in the future situation. It is therefore deemed necessary to strengthen our own combat preparations throughout Manchuria, in order to cope successfully with eventualities.

2. It can be assumed that the enemy's decision to discontinue actions during the Changkufeng Incident was due to the fact that the Kwantung Army, in concert with the Korea Army, moved up forces to the borders, as an emergency measure. Similarly, the strengthening of combat preparations is the most effective and essential means of preventing the enemy from repeating such provocative actions as the bombing raid against Fulaerhchi, and of checking hostile actions on the Nomonhan front.

At Kwantung Army Headquarters, the senior staff officer in charge of defensive affairs (Lt. Col. Murasawa) had originally favored the issuance of defense-emergency orders. The Chief of Staff and his deputy, however, felt that such measures would exert undue psychological influence upon the Manchukuoan civilian populace. It was therefore decided to prepare only air defense

1. Defense-emergency measures would have had universal application throughout all Manchukuo, affecting such matters as defense against air raids, precautions against civil disturbances, protection of key installations, etc. - Ed.

orders, whose effects would be less stringent and far-reaching.

In decreeing combat-alert measures, the first plans had called for the local procurement of horses, but Lt. Col. Katakura, Chief of the Kwantung Army's 4th Section (Manchukuoan Affairs), stressed that such a step would very adversely affect Manchukuo's agricultural development. Consequently, only the 2d Division (Hq: Mutanchiang), scheduled to move to new garrison positions, was authorized to procure about 1,000 horses from the local economy.

The Fourth Army (Hq: Peian) and the 4th Division (Hq: Chiamssu) were deliberately excluded from the combat-alert orders, since it was believed that these units did not require reinforcement. The forward displacement of the 2d and the 4th Divisions to new garrison positions near the eastern frontiers represented an especial effort to pose a threat to Soviet forces on that front. Based upon all of the foregoing considerations, Kwantung Army Headquarters issued the following order:

Kwantung Army Operations Order No. 66
1700 hours, 16 Jul 39, Hsinking

1. It is almost certain that Soviet Army has ordered mobilisation of all its forces in Far East. Soviet planes bombed vicinity of Fulaerhchi at 0300 this day.

2. Commanding General, Third Army, will strengthen combat preparations against Soviet forces, in zone east of Suifenho, by moving up and concentrating 2d Division in general area between Hailinbo and Muleng. Other units

will generally remain at their present stations. A provisional signal unit and four radio platoons will be placed under Third Army command at Mutanchiang.

3. Commanding General, Fifth Army, will strengthen combat preparations against Soviet forces, in sector west of Lake Hanka, by advancing 3d Cavalry Brigade to vicinity of Pingyangchen; 24th Cavalry Regiment will be stationed at Fuchin, as before. Other units will generally remain at their present stations. A provisional signal platoon and three radio platoons will be placed under Fifth Army command at Linkou.

4. Commanding General, 4th Division, will concentrate his main forces generally along railway between Chiamussu and Poli, after Manchukuoan Army forces have gradually taken over Division's present positions.

5. Commanding General, Fourth Army, will hasten combat preparations against Soviet forces by promptly dispatching four antitank companies to Hailar as an emergency measure; these companies will be attached to 23d Division. Main body of Fourth Army will generally remain at present stations. A provisional signal unit and a radio platoon will be placed under Fourth Army command at Peian.

6. Commanding General, 7th Division, will generally retain his units at their present locations, and will prepare to commit units to operations at any time.

7. Commanding General, Hunchun Garrison Unit, will intensify combat preparations against Soviet forces, by guarding vicinity of Wuchiatsu with about one infantry battalion and one mountain artillery battery. He will generally maintain other units at present positions.

8. Commanders of 1st, 2d, and 5th Independent Garrison Units will each concentrate about one infantry battalion at Mukden, Hsinking, and Harbin respectively, preparing same for employment in other sectors at any time.

9. Employment of troops in border areas will be governed by Kwantung Army orders for some time, Kwantung Army Operations Section Order No. 1488 [April 1939] notwithstanding.

10. Commanding General, 23d Division, will continue to perform his present mission, and will assume additional command of units attached to him, per Item 5, above.

11. Commanding General, 2d Air Group, will continue to perform his present mission.

12. (Communications matters; omitted).

13. 2d Armored Train Unit will displace to Mutanchiang, where it will maintain a state of combat readiness.

14, 15. (Omitted).

16. Senior Military Adviser to Manchukuoan Army will render guidance in assignment of Manchukuoan forces to appropriate area defense commanders, in accordance with Wartime Defense Plan. Manchukuoan forces in Sanchiang and northwestern areas, however, will generally maintain their present positions.

17, 18. (Omitted).

Command Relationships

Kwantung Army Headquarters reported its latest actions to the High Command authorities as follows, on 16 July:

TO: COFS, AGS;
War Minister
FROM: CG, Kwantung Army

In view of prevailing situation, Kwantung Army has issued orders providing for wartime air defense measures throughout Manchukuo, and has ordered combat-alert for all subordinate units (except Fourth Army and 4th Division), to ensure defense of Manchukuo.

It was the fear of Kwantung Army Headquarters that if enemy aerial activities were left unchecked, even key points within Manchukuo might be bombed in the future. The enemy's contempt was assumed to have stemmed from the passive nature of Japanese air defense, which was limited only to interception of hostile aircraft which trespassed across the frontiers.

On the same day that Order No. 66 was issued (16 July), Kwantung Army Headquarters wired a request for authorization to attack enemy air bases in Outer Mongolia immediately. At the same time, because of the grave situation, the Kwantung Army made certain recommendations to the central authorities, expressing the hope that Japan would act resolutely in the negotiations with the U.S.S.R., in keeping with the latest developments and the strengthening of combat preparedness in Manchukuo. Firmness and readiness for even a severance of relations between the two nations—these appeared to provide the only means of saving the worsening situation.

Despite urgings from Hsinking, the Army High Command did not alter its stand. On 17 July, Kwantung Army Headquarters received the following wire from Tokyo:

TO: COFS, Kwantung Army
FROM: DCOFS, AGS

1. Enemy bombing of Manchukuoan territory was a development anticipated when IGHQ Army directive No. 491 was issued 29 Jun 39. It is believed that we must--and can--restrain ourselves, in keeping with our basic policy regarding present incident, i.e., policy of localization.

From intercepted radio messages, we have inkling that enemy planes may attack Manchukuoan hinterland. There are reasons to believe that it represents last resort of enemy, after defeat of his air force.

Ground operations have already reached a stage where continuous and complete maintenance of air supremacy is not required. It is high time for study of ways and means to terminate incident voluntarily.

If such Soviet Air Force bases as Tamsag are attacked in region of Outer Mongolia and Transbaikial, prospects are that offensive will not necessarily deal a heavy blow against enemy, as Kwantung Army anticipates. On contrary, such action may cause an enlargement in scope of incident, due to possible enemy countermeasures.

We are therefore of opinion that, in view of general situation, such actions as an attack upon Tamsag would be ill-advised; and that it is instead wise to exert efforts to enhance defensive strength in Manchukuo.

2. When cited IGHQ Army Directive was issued, decision was made to abandon air attacks against enemy bases, because it was anticipated that such action might expand incident due to hostile retaliation.

Needless to say, if situation developed as stated above, scope of Soviet bombings might be enlarged to an extent which was almost intolerable from standpoint of honor of Manchukuo, even if Russians were not determined to go to war with Japan. Even in such an event, however, it is hoped in all sincerity that increased efforts will be exerted to settle incident, by taking into full consideration fact that Japan cannot permit border dispute to induce her to decide to wage war against U.S.S.R. Also thoroughly realize imprudence of taking retaliatory action in case enemy widens scope of dispute.

The reply received on 17 July from the Army General Staff incurred the resentment of all echelons at Kwantung Army Headquarters. Thereafter an emotional antagonism developed between the High Command authorities and the staff officers of Kwantung Army Headquarters.

On 18 July the Commanding General, Kwantung Army, received a wire from the Chief of the Japanese Army General Staff, ordering him to dispatch his chief of staff to Tokyo. Gen. Isogai arrived in Tokyo on 19 July and, next morning, attended conferences at General Staff Headquarters, with the Deputy Chief of the Army General Staff (Gen. Nakajima) and the Vice-Minister of War (Gen. Yamawaki) in attendance. The main points which Gen. Isogai stressed in the course of the conference may be summarized as follows:

1. The Japanese Army is concentrating its efforts upon settling the China Incident. It is the Kwantung Army's firmly held opinion that provocation of the U.S.S.R. into a war with Japan should be avoided, in so far as possible. In this respect, the Kwantung Army is in full accord with the concepts of the High Command.

2. Although the basic policy is as described above, it is extremely important (where the Nomonhan Incident is concerned) to deal a crushing blow to Soviet troops which have crossed the borders. Only by such measures can the dispute with the Soviet Union be localized, thereby indirectly facilitating the settlement of the China Incident. If Japan assumes a weak-kneed attitude at Nomonhan, hostilities will be only further enlarged.

3. It is imperative to secure the right bank sector along the Halha River.

4. It is estimated that the Soviet Union will not attempt an all-out war. If, at this juncture, Japan therefore adopts a decisive stand while simultaneously hitting the enemy along a wide front in the Nomonhan region, the U.S.S.R. can be forced to submit, and further border disputes can be prevented.

5. It is of the utmost importance to prevent the Nomonhan Incident from ending in failure, as was the case at Changkufeng.

6. An air offensive against Tamsag and Bain Tumen is a natural expedient to be adopted in retaliation for the enemy's attacks upon Kanchuerhniao and Arshaan. In particular, it is extremely important to approve an air offensive immediately, because of the present status of our air forces [i.e., deteriorating relative position vis-a-vis reinforced enemy].

After Gen. Isogai had completed his explanatory briefing, Gen. Nakajima handed him a copy of the Essentials for Settlement of the Nomonhan Incident issued by the Chief of the Army General Staff after deliberations with the War Ministry:

ESSENTIALS FOR SETTLEMENT OF NOMONHAN INCIDENT

The Nomonhan Incident is to be settled in accordance with these Essentials, based upon IGHQ Army Order No. 320 and IGHQ Army Directive No. 491. When situations arise which are difficult to handle according to the Essentials, measures shall be determined on a basis of expediency.

Operational Policy

Efforts will be made to settle the Incident by the coming winter at the latest /1939/ 1940, in accordance with the policy of localizing the affair.

Operational Essentials

1. Ground Operations: Efforts will be made to wipe out the enemy on the right bank sector of the Halha River.

If the Army achieves the desired battle results; or

if diplomatic negotiations reach agreement while the above-mentioned operations are in process; or

if the dispute is protracted until winter,

efforts will be made to evacuate troops from the disputed area at the earliest opportunity.

Even if Soviet troops enter the disputed zone subsequent to our withdrawal, no punitive ground operations will be carried out again until the situation warrants.

2. Air Operations: The Army will adopt a policy of shooting down enemy aircraft which cross the border, and will endeavor to preserve its combat strength. Even if hostile planes bomb Manchukuoan territory, no reprisal attacks will be staged against enemy bases.

3. Efforts will be made to seize the opportunity to initiate diplomatic negotiations as soon as possible, depending upon the progress of operations; and to steer the parleys toward the demarcation of boundary lines and the establishment of demilitarized zones. Negotiations which might lead to the rupture of diplomatic relations will not be conducted.

4. Efforts will be made to bring about an early solution of issues concerning Great Britain; and relations between Japan, Germany, and Italy.

5. Strict precautions will be taken to avoid the recurrence of border disputes prior to the settlement of the present Incident.

Gen. Isogai was then briefed by Generals Nakajima and Yamawaki concerning the import of the previously quoted Essentials for the Settlement of the Nomonhan Incident. The gist of the explanations follows:

It is imperative that Japan, which is striving to settle the China Incident, guard against the Soviet Union; but it is not Japan's desire to enlarge the scope of dispute with the latter. In settling the Nomonhan Incident, it is Japan's primary aim to resolve matters by achieving success in battle, with the desired objective of dislodging

enemy forces from the right shore of the Halha River (in accordance with the Essentials). Japan's policy is therefore to refrain from mounting an aerial offensive, which might only aggravate the situation.

Efforts are being made to increase military strength in Manchukuo, in so far as conditions allow; but the situation does not require a build-up of military forces dictated by a strong determination to fight the U.S.S.R. as a means of settling the Incident.

In view of the present situation, it is considered inadvisable to conduct diplomatic negotiations which might lead to the severance of diplomatic relations between Japan and the Soviet Union.

Speaking on behalf of the Kwantung Army, Gen. Isogai then expressed his opinion as follows:

1. The Kwantung Army generally concurs with the policy laid down in the Essentials for the Settlement of the Nomonhan Incident but, concerning other aspects, a number of points are unacceptable to it. In particular, Paragraphs 2 and 3, under Item 1, "Operational Essentials," are unsatisfactory.

The Kwantung Army believes that it is essential to secure the right bank sector along the Halha River.

The policy of air operations stipulated in Item 2, "Operational Essentials," is unacceptable.

2. The Kwantung Army cannot accept the view of General Staff Headquarters, which insists on withdrawal from the border line claimed by the Soviet Union. Although we can act relatively unfettered in areas where border disputes have not yet arisen, we cannot

abandon a region where controversy has erupted and where thousands of heroes' lives have been sacrificed.

If the Army High Command persists in its demand that the Kwantung Army withdraw from the present border, does that Command intend to alter its original view that the boundary line is the Halha River?

In reply to Gen. Isogai's statements, Generals Nakajima and Yamawaki reserved opinion, merely observing that "the border line cannot be decided at this conference; it is a matter for diplomatic policy."

The Chief of Staff of the Kwantung Army returned to Hsinking on 22 July, and reported to Gen. Ueda concerning the conferences conducted during his stay in Tokyo. The Commanding General, Kwantung Army, thereupon decided that the Essentials should be studied in the light of future developments in the disputed area, although the document imposed no restraints upon the Kwantung Army, being neither an order nor a directive.

Air Force Problems

Previous discussion has indicated the extent of IGHQ's shock upon receipt of the news that the Kwantung Army's air force had struck at Tamsag on 27 June, in retaliation for the enemy's initial and frequent bombings of targets within Manchukuo. The Army High Command had, at that time, immediately issued orders to suspend operations. Thereafter, the Japanese air forces in Manchukuo

were restricted to difficult defensive operations, which caused fatigue and attrition for friendly airmen and planes. The derision of the enemy was only invited by passive action, and Fulaerhchi (well inside Manchuria) was eventually bombed on 16 July.

When the Kwantung Army's Chief of Staff was in Tokyo on 20 July, he asked the General Staff for permission to resume the air offensive against Outer Mongolian bases, but his proposals were rejected. The Kwantung Army therefore had to endure patiently, amidst agonizing conditions aggravated by internal and external pressures.

Late in July, the senior air staff officer of the Army General Staff (Lt. Col. Tanikawa) arrived at Hsinking. He immediately proceeded to inspect the battlefield, where he listened to the opinions of air force officers. In company with Gen. Ueda and Col. Terada (who had participated in the frontline inspection), Col. Tanikawa returned to Hsinking on 30 July. From his first-hand appraisal of actual conditions in Northwest Manchuria, Col. Tanikawa appeared to have recognized the necessity for an aerial offensive, which the Kwantung Army had long been demanding. The AGS staff officer flew back to Tokyo on 31 July, after receiving a précis of the local authorities' opinions, which are summarized below:

Kwantung Army Recommendations to High Command

Hand-carried by Lt. Col. Tanikawa, 31 Jul 39

As stated in a series of reports, our air units operating in the Nomonhan vicinity have been achieving great success since the outbreak of the Incident. However, their mission has been limited to defensive operations: the interception and attack of enemy aircraft flying across the frontiers. As a consequence, the operations have devolved into a war of attrition. Our losses have gradually mounted, until we have already lost 60 pilots. The prospects for our air activity are being watched with the deepest concern.

On the other hand, heroic ground operations have been waged daily, despite heavy casualties, which have already reached 5,000. It is accordingly impossible for the aerial units to devote themselves to preserving their combat effectiveness alone, by abandoning support for the ground forces.

Under the circumstances, and with the objective of dealing a decisive blow to the enemy and frustrating his offensive plans, we consider it vitally important that our air units be given freedom to attack the area east of Tamsag, which is regarded as a portion of the theater of operations along the border between Mongolia and Manchukuo.

The Kwantung Army again recommends and requests approval for launching aerial offensive operations against the aforementioned, restricted area.

It is earnestly requested that this proposal be promptly accepted, with due consideration devoted to the existing situations of both friendly and hostile forces, as well as to future developments in the disputed regions.

By Commanding General, Kwantung Army

Shortly after Col. Tanikawa's inspection of the front in Manchuria, Maj. Shimamura, an operations officer on the Army General Staff, flew in from Tokyo. After personally observing the front-line situation, Maj. Shimamura also recognized the necessity of an aerial offensive, and transmitted a wire to that effect in his report to the High Command.

On 29 July and 1 August, enemy planes penetrated the Japanese air defense system and attacked air fields near Chiangchunmiao, inflicting severe losses upon the 15th and 24th Air Regiments. Col. Abe, the commander of the 15th Air Regiment, was killed.

By now, the Army High Command appeared finally to have recognized the crying need for launching air attacks against the enemy. The field inspections by Col. Tanikawa and Maj. Shimamura must have had some effect. On 7 August, the following wires were received at Kwantung Army Headquarters:

IGHQ Army Order No. 336
TO: CG, Kwantung Army
FROM: COFS, AGS

1. Commanding General, Kwantung Army, is empowered to attack enemy bases in vicinity of Tamsag and near battlefield east thereof, using air units, if deemed necessary to execute operations in Nomonhan area.

2. Detailed directives will be issued by Chief of Army General Staff.

AGS Rad Msg No. 69
TO: CG, Kwantung Army
FROM: COFS, AGS

It cannot be assumed that enemy will not launch air attacks deep into Manchukuoan territory after execution of IGHQ Army Order No. 336.

Even in such eventuality, utmost precautions must be taken to prevent air offensive or other operational activities from enlarging in scope.

AGS Rad Msg (no. unknown)
TO: COFS, Kwantung Army
FROM: DCOFS, AGS

1. In executing IGHQ Army Order No. 336, it is requested that no unwise tactical actions be employed, and that precautions be taken in determining time and methods of operations.

2. It is considered inadvisable, within general situation, to announce exact figures concerning results of above operations. When announcing any results, instructions should be issued to give impression of defensive operations at all times.

By Order of Chief of Staff

Second Air Offensive

On 8 August, Lt. Col. Minoru Miyashi, Kwantung Army Headquarters Air Staff Officer, ² proceeded to Hailar, where he delivered the new orders to the Commanding General, 2d Air Group

2. Replaced Lt. Col. Yasuyuki Miyoshi, who was transferred.
- Ed.

(Lt. Gen. Giga). When the Japanese airmen learned that the air offensive had at last been authorized, their morale soared. Nevertheless, the fatigue incurred by the air units had greatly increased by August, and considerable preparations were required to stage the projected operation. Inclement weather further delayed the raid until 21 August, when the air group finally took off for the enemy bases at Madat and Tamsag.

About 90 Soviet aircraft were destroyed in the course of the surprise air assault; ten-odd Japanese planes were crippled. In contrast to the first raid on 27 June, the enemy appeared to have put up much stiffer resistance this time.

According to supplementary data provided by Maj. Takeji Shimanuki, Kwantung Army Headquarters Operations Section staff officer at the time, 90 Japanese fighters, 60 light bombers, and 12 heavy bombers may have taken part in the second air offensive, which occurred on both 21 and 22 August. On the first day, 97 Soviet planes were destroyed, at a cost of eight; on the second day, 12 enemy aircraft were destroyed, at a cost of six. Combined figures thus indicate an estimated 109 Russian planes downed, with a Japanese loss of 14.

Data concerning the numbers of Japanese aircraft committed during the various phases of the Nomonhan Incident are presented in Table 21.

Japanese Air Units Committed at Nomonhan, May-Sep 39
(Numbers of aircraft in parentheses)

Table 21

Period	Air Brig	Air Regt	Air Sq				Total
			Recon	Ftr	L Bmbr	Hv Bmbr	
Phase I (May 39)	2	4	1 (4)	6 (54)	1 (6)	3 (12)	11 (78)
Phase II (as of early Aug 39)	2	8	3 (18)	10 (90)	4 (24)	3 (12)	20 (144)
Phase II (end of Incident)	3	14	4 (24)	18 (162)	10 (60)	3 (12)	35 (258)

Of the Army General Staff's contemporary attitude toward the Kwantung Army's air operations, Gen. Gun Hashimoto (Chief of the Operations Bureau) has stated:

The Soviet Air Force increased its bombing activities and began bombing deep into the interior of Manchuria. Therefore the Kwantung Army again emphasized the necessity of bombing the Soviet and Mongolian air bases; but in view of the general situation, the Supreme Command firmly refused. When the Chief of Staff of the Kwantung Army was summoned to Tokyo, the reasons...were explained by the Command; permission was not granted despite his repeated request.

Entering the month of August, the situation of the air force reached a condition where the enemy bases had to be neutralized in order to maintain our aerial fighting power. Thereupon, as a result of repeated inspections by the central authorities of conditions on the spot, and also in consideration of the repeated demands of the Kwantung Army, it was acknowledged (on 3 August) that air combat tactics had to be revised for self-defense. On 7 August an order was issued to the Kwantung Army, to the effect that it could use its air units to attack the enemy bases in the vicinity of Tamsag and the district east of it, in connection with the Nomonhan area operation, if the situation necessitated it.

3. Based upon affidavit of Lt. Gen. Gun Hashimoto, DMFE, Transcript, 20 May 47, p. 22,598. - Ed.

Resumption of Ground Offensive

After its first offensive ground to a halt, the 23d Division proceeded to secure Kanchuerhmiao, Fui Heights, and the vicinity of Handagai with elements of its strength. The Division retained its main body in the sectors along both banks of the Holsten River, constructed powerful defensive positions, and deployed an increasing number of heavy artillery pieces at the battlefield. Utmost precautions were taken to avoid attrition of strength, while preparing for another offensive.

About 16 July, the 1st Heavy Field Artillery Regiment, equipped with 150-mm. howitzers, reached the front. After completing preparations--laying in ammunition stocks and deploying batteries--the 23d Division unleashed all of its heavy fire power on 23 July, and neutralized the enemy's artillery. The main strength of the divisional infantry then launched heavy assaults against the enemy bridgehead on the right bank of the Halha, but the offensive achieved no decisive results, except to advance the front lines slightly. (See Map No. 21).

Meanwhile, by mid-July, the Intelligence Section of the Kwantung Army had acquired information that the enemy was planning offensive operations scheduled to commence about the middle of August. The Special Service Agency at Harbin submitted an intelligence report based upon undercover informants, according to whom

the following data was contained in such sources as a wire transmitted on 4 July from Soviet Army Headquarters in Khabarovsk to the Army Political Bureau in Moscow:

1. The local Soviet Army Headquarters has repeatedly requested a postponement of the projected offensive; these requests have been rejected, and an order has been issued to launch the offensive during the period between 5-10 August.

2. The commander of the local enemy forces has requested postponement of this attack because of incomplete preparations.

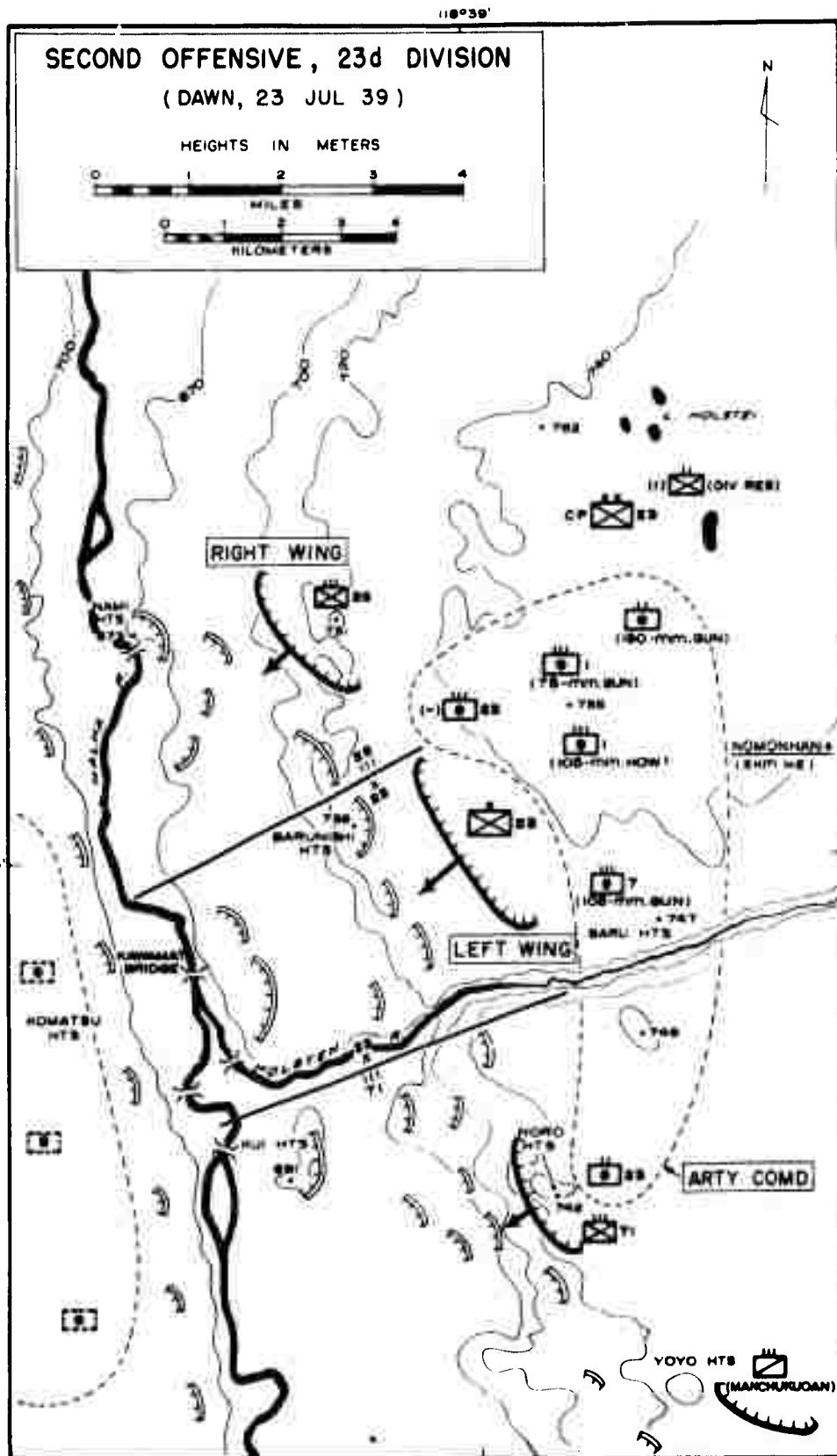
3. The enemy is complaining about supply problems.

4. At Chita, the enemy is conducting conferences regarding supply matters.

Judging from the preceding information, the Kwantung Army intelligence authorities expected that the enemy would launch an offensive on or about 14-15 August. Army Headquarters therefore undertook operational studies on this basis, after the late-July offensive of the 23d Division had been checked.

Kwantung Army Headquarters had previously issued orders concerning the construction of positions for envisaged winter operations. Each element of the 23d Division was to establish defenses sufficiently strong to hold off an enemy offensive for approximately one month. The orders called for the preparation of wells, a water supply system, and living quarters, but sufficient effort could not be diverted from the construction of front-line works to

MAP NO. 21



this project.

At the same time, the Soviet Army's activities seemed to betoken a possible full-scale war. Kwantung Army Headquarters therefore drafted over-all strategic plans to cope with such an eventuality, embracing the operations of all subordinate army commands.

The Commanding General, Kwantung Army, held the following views, which closely approximated those of the Chief of Staff and his Deputy:

It is most likely that the enemy will launch an enveloping attack from the direction of Fui Heights (on our right flank), or from the most extreme point on our left flank. If the foe plunges against us, especially on the outer flanks, it would not be impossible to repulse him at the key positions of the 23d Division's existing defenses, while advancing to the left bank of the Halha River (as before).

If, however, the enemy eliminates our defenses, one sector at a time, will our present strength suffice to repulse the foe? Will it be feasible to abandon the plan of committing the 7th Division as a reinforcement--or at least of moving it up to the vicinity of Hailar?

In order to implement the views of the Kwantung Army Command, the headquarters staff officers conducted intensive logistical studies. It was found that the number of motor vehicles in action at the battlefront at that time totaled only 1,000 (the maximum quantity available for Kwantung Army use). Of the number, about 400 vehicles were being used by individual front-line units, while the remaining 600 were performing line-of-communication service.

Approximately 200 of the vehicles were probably inoperable at the time, however. If the battle zone were to be maintained during the winter months, moreover, a tremendous transportation capacity would be required for the preparations. Consequently, plans for reinforcing front-line strength had to be kept to a minimum.

An increase in the number of motor vehicles was the primary, most urgent requirement of the Kwantung Army. Repeated requests were conveyed to the Army High Command authorities, but no assurances were forthcoming. Under the circumstances, Kwantung Army Headquarters could only conclude that the large-scale transfer of desired reinforcements was absolutely unfeasible. Although the enemy's offensive was anticipated in August, the limited number of available motor transport dictated the decision merely to reinforce front-line strength with one regiment of the 7th Division and to replenish the battered 23d Division as soon as possible. The following plans were accordingly drafted:

ESSENTIALS FOR EXPEDITING OPERATIONAL
PREPARATIONS IN CONNECTION WITH NOMON-
HAN INCIDENT (Draft)

In anticipation of the enemy's offensive plans scheduled for mid-August, the requisite operational preparations will be expedited in order to frustrate and destroy the foe.

Operational Policy

Operational preparations will be expedited in the Nomonhan area, with the intention of destroying enemy counterattacks in front of

our positions. Enemy offensives along other sectors (Fui Heights or Noro Heights) will be defeated, using our positions as key points.

Simultaneously, operational preparations on the East Manchuria front will also be expedited.

Operational Plans

1. Operational preparations in the Nomonhan area will be expedited by 10 August, as follows.

a. Casualties of the 23d Division will be quickly replaced by personnel not presently included in the authorized strength of the forces in Manchukuo.

1st draft:	1,300
2d draft:	2,000
3d draft:	800

Total	4,100
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(All figures approximate).

b. Four thousand replacement troops from Japan will be assembled and trained at Hailar.

c. Platoon leaders will be replaced from forces stationed in Manchuria. Officer replacements of company-commander rank and higher will be requested of the Army High Command as soon as possible.

d. For the different types of artillery, ammunition will be dumped in the battle zone (10 basic loads per piece).⁴

4. In Japanese Army usage, basic loads for artillery pieces comprised the following: 75-mm. gun--100 rounds; 10-cm. gun--50 rounds; 15-cm. gun or howitzer--30 rounds. - Ed.

e. At Kanchuerhmiao, Amukulang, Fui Heights, and the sectors on both banks of the Holsten River, fortifications will be hurriedly constructed for combat use at any time; they will then be gradually strengthened according to established plans.

f. The 23d Division will concentrate approximately one infantry regiment in the vicinity of Nomonhan, and will prepare to move the following forces to be committed at Fui or Noro Heights, as the situation requires:

Approximately two infantry regiments
(including at least eight antitank companies);

approximately three artillery battalions
(Model 90 field guns; 10-cm. guns; 15-cm. guns).

g. Air defenses in the vicinity of Arshaan will be strengthened. Manchukuoan Army fortifications near Handagai will be roughly completed.

h. The 6th Battalion, 1st Independent Garrison Unit [Hq: Mukden] will be placed under the Commanding General, 23d Division, at Hailar.

i. From the 7th Division, one brigade headquarters [14th Inf Brig], plus the 28th Infantry Regiment and one artillery battalion will advance to Hailar, where they will be placed under the direct control of the Kwantung Army.

j. Railroad construction between Arshaan and Handagai, and preparation of winter quarters near the battle zone will be expedited.

2. Preparations for operations in East Manchuria will be hastened as follows.

a. The delivery, or preparation for delivery, of horses procured locally will be made to the Third Army, Fifth Army, and 4th Division, in accordance with the organizational charts for emergency mobilization.

b. The concentration of operations materiel (bridging supplies in particular) will be completed in the requisite areas.

c. Operational training will be roughly completed by mid-August, and entirely finished by the end of that month.

d. Field fortification materiel will be replenished and assembled in the Hutou area.

e. Between Hulin and Mishan, anti-aircraft defenses will be reinforced on a priority basis.

f. In the zone of the Fifth Army, the construction of three bridges across the Muleng River will be completed by the end of August.

g. Reconnaissance measures and operational preparations required to deal with the over-all situation on the Fifth Army front will be generally completed by early August.

h. 19th Division operations staff officers (in addition to other officers, as required) will conduct reconnaissance of the disputed border areas.

i. Lookout-post surveillance of enemy territory will be intensified, for the time being. Speedy methods of reporting will be assured.

Winter Readiness

In the event that the enemy's offensive operations were carried out for a protracted period, countermeasures had to be devised. A weakness of the enemy lay in the fact that he had to depend upon the Halha River as his source for battlefield water supply. The Kwantung Army therefore drafted plans for a new offensive to be launched during the autumn against the left bank of the Halha, using the 7th Division to reinforce the 23d Division. Such an assault, it was hoped, would eliminate the enemy's water supply source by securing key points on both sides of the Halha; Japanese troops would then remain there constantly throughout the winter. Surveys soon demonstrated, however, that battlefield operations would be exceptionally difficult in winter, since the temperature often drops to - 58 degrees F. The previously cited plans were therefore abandoned. Instead, the following countermeasures were adopted in case the fighting should drag on through the winter.

KWANTUNG ARMY ESSENTIALS FOR SETTLING NOMONHAN INCIDENT

Operational Policy

The Army will endeavor to compel the enemy to abandon his ambitions by destroying the fighting effectiveness of the Soviet-Mongolian Army, while stepping up preparations to secure the gains already acquired, even in the coldest season.

If the enemy attempts protracted resistance, the Army will at any cost overwhelm and destroy him.

Operational Outline

1. The Army will expedite the construction of fortifications and facilities for winter quarters as prearranged, so as to enable itself to secure the gains already acquired, even in severe cold.

Furthermore, the Army will construct winter-quarter facilities for about two infantry battalions, about one artillery battalion, two motor transport companies, and two anti-aircraft artillery units in the vicinity of Handagai.

The following units will be additionally attached to the Sixth Army⁵ in order to expedite the construction of the above-mentioned facilities:

Units under the command of Maj. Gen.
Morita [CG, 14th Inf Brig];
7th Engineer Regiment;
One motor transport company, 7th
Transport Regiment;
Headquarters, Motor Transport Command,
Kwantung Army;
2d Motor Transport Regiment

The 6th Battalion of the Independent Garrison Unit in Hailar will also be employed.

The commander of the 3d Independent Garrison Unit will construct necessary facilities for winter quarters for units under his command in Hsingan Province.

2. Efforts will be made to terminate operational activities of the main body of the Army by winter of this year. For this purpose,

5. For details of activation of new Sixth Army, see following text. - Ed.

the Army will not only check the enemy offensive, but will also destroy the foe on the right bank of the Halha River and, if necessary, plan to dominate the Halha River. Especial attention will be given to taking advantage of the ice-drift period on the blocked Halha River.

Operational activities will not be carried out on the left bank of the Halha River.

Before the severe cold sets in, the Sixth Army will shift its main strength to its former bases, and will secure the right bank sector of the Halha River with powerful elements.

3. Necessary preparations for operations will be expedited, in consideration of the possible resumption of large-scale battles after spring of next year 1940.

The railway connecting Arshaan, Handagai and Chiangchunmiao will, in particular, be speedily constructed.

4. Efforts will be made to limit the disputed area to the vicinity of the west bank of the Holsten River. Necessary fortifications will be constructed in the Kanchuerhmiao - Amukulang and Handagai - Arshaan areas. If the situation permits, the Manchukuoan Army will take charge of the defense of these areas. Efforts will be made to avoid an outbreak of disputes in the area west of Lake Buir Nor.

5. Air units will destroy the enemy air force and will cooperate with ground operations. During the winter, necessary air units will remain, secure the gains achieved, and co-ordinate actions with ground units. Present staging air fields will be equipped with necessary facilities for winter quarters.

6. Necessary preparations for operations will be expedited, in case the present Incident develops into a full-scale war between Japan and the U.S.S.R.

7. Efforts will be made to exploit the gains achieved during the course of this Incident, in order to encourage the Outer Mongolians to shake off the yoke of the Soviet Union.

8. Diplomatic negotiations will not be initiated by us. During enemy-instigated diplomatic negotiations, our complete freedom of military action will be maintained inside the border.

Attache's Message

While Kwantung Army Headquarters was preparing for future operations in early August, an information copy of a message was received from the Japanese Military Attache in Moscow (Col. Akio Doi). The purport of this wire coincided, in general, with the essentials of the Kwantung Army draft plans, outlined above.

TO: DCOFS, AGS
FROM: ARMA, Moscow

Opinions concerning Outer Mongolian Nomonhan Incident are hereby submitted, as follows.

Decisions

1. Impregnable fortifications must be constructed within shortest possible time at appropriate locations away from Halha River. It is necessary to fortify border lookout positions so that they may be held permanently, thereby forcing enemy to forego his intention of regaining border regions.

2. Home front in Japan must be strengthened.

Reasons

1. Estimate of situation vis-a-vis U.S.S.R., as described in previous radio messages, remains unchanged. Soviet Union will increasingly devote self to intensifying war preparations vs. Japan, and to regaining Outer Mongolian frontier.

In view of statements successively issued by Soviet authorities, it is clear that U.S.S.R. attaches importance to political significance of recent Incident, especially from viewpoint of policies toward Outer Mongolia and other races, as well as from viewpoint of domestic policy. If status quo is maintained, war of attrition will continue indefinitely, although it may vary in intensity at different times.

Soviet authorities have not yet initiated a vigorous propaganda campaign regarding Nomonhan Incident, but they are stepping up aggressive and boastful propaganda concerning their over-all victory in Changkufeng Incident, both at home and abroad. This is because our current fighting spirit remains undiscouraged and issue of battle is yet to be determined. Besides, there is some chance that scope of combat may be enlarged.

It is therefore estimated that once we express a desire for an armistice, or withdraw from battlefield, enemy will immediately launch vigorous propaganda effort, as in Changkufeng affair.

2. If present war of attrition continues, early settlement of Incident will become impossible.

Withdrawal by us (as in case of Changkufeng Incident) is inadvisable, however--this is precisely what enemy desires. He would

again take advantage of our weak stand and would conduct propaganda campaign with far greater effects than resulted from Changkufeng Incident. In addition, he would be induced to retain view that Japan is unable to wage war.

It is believed that most favorable measures to adopt at this time include following: Avoid large-scale battles of attrition in future. Cause enemy eventually to abandon hostilities with Japan, by immediately constructing powerful fortifications in area where we can manifest our firm determination to secure borders, and by holding these regions for long period. Be prepared to crush enemy offensive.